



Forum for
Theological
Exploration



Peer Ministry Cohort

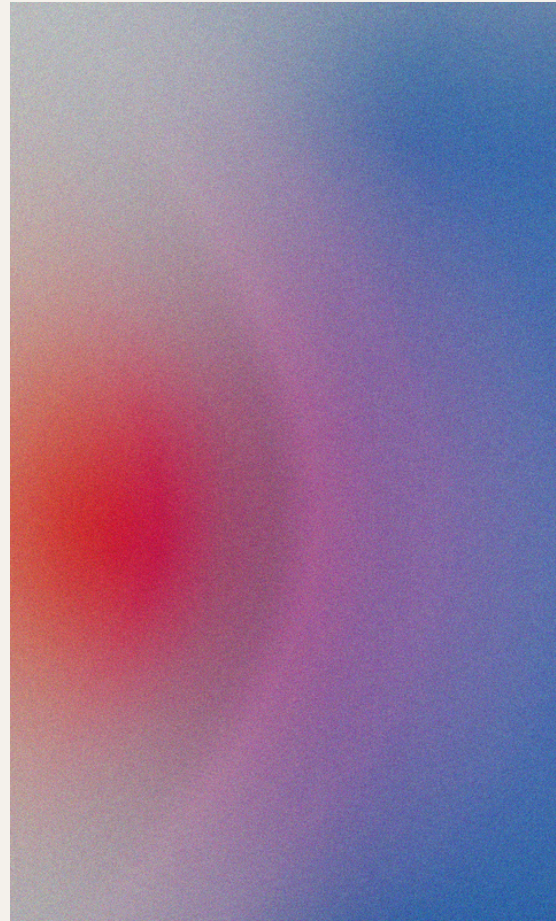
Ekklesia Campus Ministry-Missouri State University
Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman

Part of the UKIRK Launch Series

INVITING STUDENTS TO DISCOVER WHO THEY ARE,
WHO GOD IS,
THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN THEM,
AND HOW THEY ARE CALLED TO SERVE AND LEAD

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Peer Ministry Cohort

Ekklesia at Missouri State University

Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman

Basic summary of the program:

The Peer Ministry Cohort program at Ekklesia is a year-long, justice-centered leadership and vocational discernment initiative rooted in progressive Christian and interfaith values. Students serve as peer ministers, each with a specialized focus, such as: racial justice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, interfaith engagement, and community outreach. Each peer minister is paired with a nurture team for mentoring, support, and reflection. The program was initially funded through a combination of grants from the Lilly Endowment, Interfaith America, and denominational partners.

Materials & Resources Needed:

- Peer Ministry Orientation Retreat curriculum
- Ongoing training resources (e.g. StrengthsQuest, interfaith workshops, racial justice education)
- Honoraria for guest speakers, books/articles for discussion
- Grant funding to support stipends and programming
- Collaborative partnerships with local churches, campus offices, and community organizations

Cost: All materials, retreat expenses, and stipends are provided by the ministry and (hopefully) supported through various grant programs. Each peer minister is paid \$400/month.

Basic summary of the program (cont.):

Time Period: The program runs over the academic year (August–May). Peer Ministers apply in late spring or summer, participate in an intensive orientation retreat before the fall semester, and meet weekly with the campus minister for reflection and training. Monthly nurture team meetings continue throughout the year.

Evaluation & Reflection Opportunities:

- Pre- and post-engagement surveys
- Monthly one-on-ones with the campus minister
- Monthly nurture team meetings
- End-of-year narrative reflection and group evaluation
- Mid-year retreat check-in (as funding allows)

Target Audience: Open to undergraduate students, particularly sophomores through seniors. Students in transitional stages of identity development, spiritual exploration, or vocational discernment are especially well-suited. Graduate students may serve as mentors or resource persons but are not the primary candidates. (See attached document for a description of our initial peer ministry program, including training materials, etc...)

Brief description of why the program is designed or organized the way it is:

Before this program, we had one peer minister at a time, and it was always someone who already knew they were on a path to ministry. The formation of our peer ministry cohort has opened up our leadership to a larger and more diverse group of people, and therefore contributes to greater diversity in leadership in our ministry and in the church of the future. We believe that the intention with which we have designed this program serves our ministry and our campus well, while also providing individualized growth and discernment support for each student participant.

What do you hope the students discern, discover, or reflect upon during their participation?

We hope students begin to discern what “calling” might look like in their lives, not just in terms of career, but in the deeper sense of being summoned toward wholeness and authenticity. We want them to discover that faith can be expansive, inclusive, and alive with purpose. We want them to reflect on their own identities, privileges, and passions, and to learn to name how those intersect with the needs of the world. Most of all, we want them to see that leadership doesn’t mean having all the answers, it means showing up in community with humility, curiosity, and courage.

What action(s) do you hope their participation inspires after the program or experience is over in both the short-term and long-term?

Short-term:

- Increased engagement in campus and community organizing
- Healing from religious trauma
- Greater confidence in navigating faith, justice, and identity
- Collaborative leadership among peers and with mentors
- A deeper sense of rootedness and purpose in their academic and spiritual lives

Long-term:

- Lifelong commitment to justice-oriented faith and civic engagement
- Vocational clarity, whether in ministry, activism, education, or elsewhere
- Continued relationship with the ministry as alumni mentors and supporters
- Courage to say yes when called, and just as importantly, no when they’re not

What have you discerned, discovered, seen or reflected upon as you have engaged students in this program/practice?

Since the expansion and diversification of our peer ministry program, we've seen our ministry's impact on our campus multiply. Our commitment to walking alongside students on their personal faith and life journey has led us to places we wouldn't have gone on our own. We have discovered that when we create a space for students to lead with courage and authenticity, they step into it and we all become better for having taken the journey. We continue to hone the program to meet the current needs of our campus, community, and students and incorporate new learnings each year.



Ekklesia


a progressive campus ministry

Peer Minister Application

If you are interested in applying for a Peer Minister position for the upcoming academic year, please complete this form and email your resume and cover letter to michelle@ekkesiansu.org

ukirk@ukirk.org [Switch account](#)



 Not shared

First and Last Name

Your answer

Pronouns

Your answer



Year in College

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Other:

Major

Your answer

What is your faith tradition or background? If Christian, what denomination? (note: there is no requirement to adhere to a particular faith tradition, but we are a progressive Christian ministry and a part of the position would include participation in worship services and other faith-based activities)

Your answer

What interests you about Ekklesia peer ministry?

Your answer

Which peer ministry position(s) interest you? Mark all that apply. These are some of the peer ministry positions we've had in the past. Some are necessary each year, but it's more important to us to offer a developmental path for you that fits your skills, interests, and passions. So feel free to choose "self-designed position!"

- ☐ LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Advocacy
- ☐ Social and Racial Justice
- ☐ Interfaith Exploration
- ☐ Community Engagement
- ☐ Access and Equity
- ☐ Worship Arts
- ☐ Self Designed Position

Tell us about your skills and passions.

Your answer

Submit

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of Ekklesia Campus Ministry. - [Contact form owner](#)

Does this form look suspicious? [Report](#)

Google Forms

Ekklesia Peer Ministry Cohort

The following is a summary of the work done during the initial development of our Peer Ministry Cohort program. We align the work of our peer ministers each year with other things happening in the life of the ministry, including but not limited to grant projects that are currently underway, and the interests and passions of the gathered students. The foci vary from year to year, but the program framework, goals, and values remain the same.

Ekklesia Peer Ministers best serve, learn, and grow in a cohort model, sharing responsibility for the work of the ministry with staff ministers working on three different grant programs. The grants funding portions of the work in year one were the Campus Ministry Theological Exploration of Vocation grant from the Lilly Endowment, Interfaith Youth Core Campus Innovation Grant in partnership with MSU Multicultural Programs Office, and Mid-America Disciples Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation/Justice Ministries Grant in partnership with National Avenue Christian Church. Ekklesia hired student staff members under each grant to help coordinate the grant activities within the larger framework of the day to day ministry of Ekklesia. The initial cohort of peer ministers included an LGBTQ+ Peer Minister, Interfaith Peer Minister, Social and Racial Justice Peer Minister, and a Community Outreach Peer Minister.

Each student peer minister was assigned a nurture team to assist them in their vocational discernment. Nurture teams consist of the campus minister, a clergy person from their tradition, a layperson from a local faith community, and a community organizer or other community partner. Members of the nurture teams are invited to participate in an orientation retreat with the peer ministers. The retreat curriculum and timeline can be found at Appendix A. The orientation

retreat is the first step in coordinating all of the work of the project and is necessary for an understanding of the aims of the cohort as well as the mission of the campus ministry.

We seek to create a synergy and collaborative space by intentionally using these three programs together to build inclusive and engaged community that works together through church, academy, and civic engagement to bring transformation and justice, and that can be sustained after the grant periods end. The peer ministers work on campus to promote and carry out the ministry's normal activities, such as worship and discussion groups. They are also each be responsible for an area of engagement based on their peer ministry concentration. This engagement takes place in the community and in the local churches that are in relationship with the ministry.

Three Points of Connection with Church and Community

The ministry's annual plan is built around the peer ministry cohort and its engagement with specific, grant-funded programs. One important aim is to learn how to make use of existing resources to engage in programming and activities that are mutually beneficial to the campus ministry, the University, the local Church, and the community. The three specific programs that guided our work in Year One of the project are described below: Disciples Uniting for Racial Justice, Explorations in Faith, Sexuality and Gender, and Interfaith Work at Missouri State University. Separate timelines for each program can be found at Appendix B.

Disciples Uniting for Racial Justice

One of the strengths of this ministry has long been collaboration. As we seek to reach the university community with the good news of the gospel, our fervent prayer is that Missouri State University and Springfield, Missouri, will be places where faithful people enter tough conversations to build authentic relationships that will transform the world. Our ministry has a number of campus and community partners, with some of the strongest being four local Disciple churches: National Avenue Christian Church, Brentwood Christian Church, South Street Christian Church, and Central Christian Church. One of our goals for the coming year is to strengthen our relationship with these churches so that there is more opportunity for intergenerational conversations and activities that illuminate racist and oppressive systems inside and outside the church and provide opportunities for participants to examine their own participation and create a personal plan to challenge racist structures and understand power and privilege.

One of our ministry's strategies is to seek grant funding to start an initiative that we believe is important to our students and the community, evaluate the program for effectiveness and impact, and then find ways to continue the work alongside the programs that we currently have. We believe this Reconciliation Grant will allow us to start an important conversation about racism and white supremacy between students at Missouri State and our local Disciples churches that will continue for years to come, deepening relationships and moving our congregations toward action.

We believe that this partnership has great potential to expand (in some cases begin) an important dialogue in Springfield area churches about racism and white supremacy, and the ways in which our church has both contributed to and spoken out against racist policies and actions.

This past January, the Springfield Disciples of Christ churches and Ekklesia organized and offered an AR/PR training which included a “2.0” component on organizing for racial justice. In addition to the usual AR/PR training that is offered in our region, we facilitated a community session the evening before that encouraged real and honest dialogue between church members, community members, and students. The training was well received, and many participants expressed their desire to “do more of that!” A follow up event was held on May 3 and the group expressed a desire to do more to learn from and be in solidarity with African American members of our community. On May 15, more than a dozen Disciples showed up at an emergency press conference called by the local NAACP president to confront the school district on its failure to respond appropriately to a racist video made by a student. This grant is going to allow us to invest in this activity and help our students and our local churches learn how to best support our community.

The project includes three components: continuation of the church based DURJ meetings on a bi-monthly basis; a series of student led community conversations called “Hey Springfield, Let’s Talk About Race;” and an organizing effort to include local church and community members in on-campus conversations and actions. Springfield is an ideal place to have these conversations because the University provides resources and opportunities for anyone who is willing to come on campus for them. Some of those resources include historical displays, research, events that highlight diversity and inclusion, free and low-cost speakers from a variety of disciplines, and many others.

Explorations in Faith, Sexuality and Gender

Ekklesia has been awarded a grant from the Phillip N. Knutson Endowment for Lutheran Campus Ministry to conduct a program in the coming year called Explorations in Faith, Sexuality and Gender. The application for this grant was submitted with the hope of deepening our connection with the national Lutheran Campus Ministry network and with the local ELCA churches.

Ekklesia is uniquely poised to have these conversations with students on campus and in the local community. We are the only ministry on campus giving LGBTQ+ students a positive message about faith and their sexuality. They are invited to question, doubt, and think critically about the faith they've inherited and to begin to own it for themselves. Ekklesia is also the only ministry on campus talking about sex in any way other than abstinence.

We find that many students, particularly those who identify as LGBTQ+, have erected a wall within their lives that divides their social development, sexuality, and gender expression from their religious or non-religious spiritual identities. Our students, especially those who hail from the Bible Belt have heard messages their whole lives that dehumanize them and all but assure them that the love of God is not for them. Even though we've made some strides forward in our societal attitudes, the mainline church in the Midwest is far from a bastion of safety and security for young people who think differently than their ancestors in the faith regarding issues of sexuality, social norms, and what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

This project offers space and time for students to chip away at the wall and to explore the intersections of their own understandings of faith, sexuality, and gender. It is our hope that students will find it possible to reconcile their faith with their sexuality or gender identity, and that students who are cisgender and heterosexual will also discover ways of integrating their own

views with their faith to create a live-able expression of faith that represents their deepest convictions and values and honors their peers, friends, and family who may or may not identify differently than them.

The primary engagement will be through a series of monthly Lunch and Learn events called “Explorations in Faith, Gender and Sexuality.” In addition to the monthly Lunch and Learn programs, Ekklesia will include two speakers in our Faith and Life Matters Speaker Series that address the current conversation and climate regarding full inclusion of all people in our society and in God’s church. Ekklesia’s LGBTQ+ Peer Minister will work to build collaborations on campus that increasingly draw the circle wider. We want every student to know that they don’t have to make a choice between loving and serving God and being true to themselves. In fact, we want them to know that we believe that God has created them beautiful, worthy, and unique just as they are, and that God calls them to live in the world, and in their faith in the full authenticity of that unique beauty. The objectives of program are:

- To provide students and others with a safe and brave space to name their identities, to imagine the ways their identities contribute to and intersect with their faith, and to hear from others with similar and very different understandings.
- To offer a witness on campus and to the wider community that God loves and welcomes all God’s children into the house of faith, and that God uses a diversity of faithful followers to proclaim God’s love and grace to the world.
- To open wide the circle of God’s love on campus and help students and others learn how to be a progressive Christian confidently in a sea of fundamentalism.

Interfaith at Missouri State

With a Campus Innovation Grant from the Interfaith Youth Core, Ekklesia is working with key partners at Missouri State University to develop an Interfaith Council with broad representation from many areas of campus. This Council will provide a process by which students from minority religions or worldviews can request assistance with some issue of accommodation or support in their living or academic environments. The Council will also work to increase awareness and appreciation of religious and worldview diversity on campus and encourage creativity in imagining how we might use our diversity to better serve our campus, community, and world.

A 2015 Campus and Community Climate survey revealed that Christians are fairly satisfied with how the University addresses religious and spiritual values while non-Christians expressed neutral feelings at best. As a public university, Missouri State has struggled to address religious and worldview diversity in ways that ensure that students develop as whole persons throughout their academic preparation as undergraduate students. An Interfaith Diversity Task Force in 2017 created a plan to improve the campus climate around inclusion of minority religions. The plan included an Interfaith Space on campus. After two years of failed negotiations, the interfaith space, under a less “controversial” name (Room of Reflection) was opened this spring. A goal of the Interfaith Council is to provide education around things like the Establishment Clause and Religious Accommodation laws that help the University community make better progress on inclusion in the future.

After completion of a Campus Interfaith Inventory, we identified two areas where growth is needed: accommodation and respect for religious and nonreligious identity, and student leadership. The Council will be a first step toward institutionalizing our commitment to

acknowledging, supporting, and celebrating religious and worldview diversity on campus. The 25-member council will include representatives from each residence hall, each College within the University, the Student Government Association, and at large members who have an interest in interfaith support and cooperation.

The Council will provide a process for students to bring concerns about religious accommodation and inclusion, while also offering programming to increase awareness and appreciation of diversity on campus. The Council will bring a speaker or event to campus each semester that educates students on some aspect of religious or worldview diversity and encourages all students to take some action to move the campus toward full inclusion. In addition to these events, the Council will organize a minimum of one Interfaith Service Day each semester. These service days will include opportunities for diverse teams to complete service projects and engage in dialogue after the project about the common values that allowed them to serve together.

Interfaith activities at Missouri State are always filled with both students and members of the local community. We hope to deepen our connections with the community by expanding the interfaith conversation that is occurring on campus to community wide events. This year there have been two prayer vigils, unfortunately marking mass shootings at Jewish and Muslim houses of worship, as well as educational Seder and Iftar dinners. At each of these events, there was strong collaboration with the local Interfaith Alliance as well as many churches, the synagogue, and the Islamic Center. This grant will allow Ekklesia to go deeper with this work in the coming year.

Components of the Catalytic Process

Ekklesia uses four components of the catalytic process consistently across all of its programs to determine whether they offer a model for replication in other projects and programs. Those components are combined leadership, shared experiences, experimentation with honest evaluation, and tension as a creative force. More is said about each of these components in the following section.

Combined Leadership

In order to provide the best environment for innovation and collaboration, the leadership for every endeavor must be shared broadly by a diverse group of people. This diversity should include gender, age, sexuality and gender identity, race, and religious worldview at a minimum. The more diverse the leadership for a program or event, the greater the opportunity for growth from the event. An article in Harvard Business Review states it simply “nonhomogenous teams are simply smarter. Working with people who are different from you may challenge your brain to overcome its stale ways of thinking and sharpen its performance.”¹ Of course, this also means that there will be a greater opportunity for conflict. We will also argue that conflict in this process is a positive, and not a negative. There is no substitute for the imaginative possibilities that arise from multiple people offering their leadership in any given situation. During the act of ministry, we will experiment with leadership teams that come from a variety of backgrounds and offer differing viewpoints. Data about the constitution of different leadership teams, their processes, and the results of their work together will be collected and analyzed to determine

¹ David Rock and Heidi Grant, “Why Diverse Teams are Smarter” *Harvard Business Review*, November 4, 2016. <https://leadersforgood.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/H038YZ-PDF-ENG.pdf>.

whether there were any patterns that held throughout the project that we may want to replicate, or not.

Shared Experiences

An extremely valuable part of this process will be the shared experiences of the participants, and the ways that they processed them, both individually and together. As the participants become better at formulating and sharing their own Story of Self and beginning to formulate together a Story of Us, shared experiences will offer a common starting point for important conversations about viewpoints and understandings.

In the book, *Better Together*, Robert Putnam talks about “bonding” and “bridging” social capital. “*Bonded* social capital is inward focused and frequently associated with a tight-knit identity group, like a religious community. *Bridged* social capital is outward facing and involved working together across lines of difference.”² Research suggests that bonding and bridging social capital strengthens both communities. When a person spends time in their own community, sharing experiences and building a shared memory bank, they have more social capital to offer to the outside community. In turn, spending time in the outside community in a positive way gets returned to the original community in social capital.

Finally, shared experiences, foster a sense of camaraderie and deepen empathy among those who shared the experience. One need only look to the way war veterans or Harley riders greet one another to become aware of this paradox. This project seeks to build compassionate, engaged, and empathetic community through shared experience.

Experimentation with Honest Evaluation

² Robert Putnam, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 18.

Key to the success of any project is taking risks. This project encourages experimentation in order to meet the goals set forth for any given activity. Peer ministers especially are encouraged to look for experimental solutions to issues that may arise, seeking input from a diverse group of leaders, so that with each new experience, there is new learning. Campus ministry lends itself well to this outlook, while local churches tend to shy away from experimentation for fear of failure. Every leader and every participant should walk away from this project having had at least one experience that they've never had before.

Necessary with such an open and experimental outlook to leadership and ministry is honest evaluation. There is no room to withhold constructive criticism for fear of hurting someone's feelings, nor is there room for ultra-sensitivity around the success or failure of one's ideas. When leadership teams are able to be innovative in their planning and problem solving, the project will achieve results that are both positive and unplanned. Likewise, there will be results that are both negative and unplanned. In both cases, there will be learning. A spirit of experimentation with honest evaluation is the practical application of a theology of surprise.

Tension as Creative Force

There is a meme that often cycles through social media that says "Being taught to avoid talking about politics and religion has led to a lack of understanding of politics and religion. What we should have been taught was how to have a civil conversation about a difficult topic." The original source is unclear, but the message is right on. It is no secret that when you gather more than one person in one place particularly if they are working on a project together, that there will be tension. In the current climate of our world tension often blows up into all-out conflict in a matter of moments.

This project seeks to allow space for tension, create dialogue around it, and help the participants come up with solutions that honor many viewpoints while striving to meet the goal of the collective group. Participants will be encouraged to both allow and engage in the tension that arises in shared leadership and shared experiences. It is the belief of the author that the moments where there is tension in the process may create the greatest opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Special care is taken to record anecdotal evidence around tension in the processes of the project, the manner of resolution that was employed, and the results.

Appendix A: Peer Ministry Retreat Curriculum

PEER MINISTER ORIENTATION RETREAT SCHEDULE

Day 1 (Friday)

4:00-5:00	Arrive at retreat center and settle into rooms
5:00-6:00	Dinner
6:00-6:30	Session 1: Review retreat schedule and introduce POP Model
6:30-8:15	Session 2: White Like Me film & discussion
8:15-8:30	Break
8:30-10:00	Session 3: Between the World & Me video & discussion
10:00-10:15	Personal Response/Prayer

Day 2 (Saturday)

8:00-9:00	Breakfast
9:00-10:00	Opening Worship: A Service of Confession, Healing, and Hope
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Session 4: What is Peer Ministry?
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Session 5: History and Theological Foundations of our Ministry
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:15	Session 6: Organizing as a Tool for Liberation
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-4:30	Session 7: Identities, Social Location, and Intersectionality
4:30-6:00	Session 8: Storytelling for Social Change
6:00-7:00	Dinner
7:00-8:00	Session 9: Identifying Justice Issues on Campus and in the Community
8:00-8:15	Break
8:15-9:45	Session 10: Liberating Sexuality and Gender
9:45-10:00	Personal Response/Prayer

Day 3 (Sunday)

8:00-8:30	Continental Breakfast
8:30-11:00	Session 11: Interfaith Work at Missouri State University
11:00-12:00	Closing Worship
12:00-1:00	Lunch & Depart

Pre-retreat assignments: take Strengthsquest inventory and bring printed results, read Coates article “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” read Interfaith Leadership book

Session 1: Review retreat schedule and introduce POP Model

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: copies of retreat schedule with POP printed on back side

Purpose: To review the weekend schedule and orient students to the POP process for planning and facilitating meetings, events, etc.

Objectives: Students will understand how POP sets the stage for what is happening and helps to stay on track. Students will imagine ways that they can use a POP process to be more intentional in their work as peer ministers.

Process:

This is a demanding schedule. I know that the name retreat may have been a bit of a misnomer! However, this retreat is intentionally designed to wake us, challenge us, stretch us, and call us. We do this ministry in a number of contexts that make a difference in when, where, how, and with whom we do our work. As much as possible, we'll acknowledge those contexts and discuss their strengths and challenges. We will model tools and processes by which you can be successful as peer ministers now and as engaged and justice-minded citizens later. Take a moment now to silence your phone, take a few deep cleansing breaths, note your embodied presence in this place and let go of all that is not here. It will still be waiting for you when you're finished here.

Any questions about the schedule before we jump in?

Throughout this retreat, as well as in our staff meetings and other planning processes, we will use a model referred to as POP. POP stands for Purpose, Outcomes, and Process. It's a simple system that helps us to be accountable to our mission and to one another for our time and efforts. It helps us to stay focused on the task at hand, and it ensures that we all know what we're doing when we get together. Additionally, it gives us a basis for assessment, to determine whether we achieved our desired purpose, or if we need to make adjustments the next time.

We begin here because this is a powerful and simple tool that can be used in all aspects of our ministry. As peer ministers are planning their own meetings and events, this simple tool will help to create an environment where the participants know the purpose and goals of the event and can effectively assess whether the goals were met at the end. Throughout this retreat, we'll model the use of POP and the peer ministry team will learn its value and be encouraged to make use of it in our peer ministry work. So let's take a look at our POP for our weekend. The POP process can be used to give direction to the overall experience, as well as the individual pieces of the agenda. As we go through the sessions of the retreat, you'll see that each one has its own POP, and that they connect with, or complement, the overall POP.

Purpose: To orient a new peer ministry cohort to Ekklesia, to peer ministry on campus, and to justice-oriented ministry with an eye toward liberation for oppressed and marginalized communities.

Outcomes:

- Peer ministers will begin to comprehend the intersectionality of their respective concentrations and to imagine ways to work together for liberation
- Peer ministers will be able to describe the work of peer ministry with Ekklesia to someone who is not familiar with the term
- Peer ministers will have courageous conversations about difficult topics and be able to name something that they learned about themselves in the process
- Peer ministers will feel equipped and ready to begin their peer ministry at MSU
- Peer ministers will connect with local church members and ministry board members who will serve as partners in their work

Process: Outcomes will be achieved through an intensive weekend retreat with shared meals, shared housing, and multi-disciplinary learning opportunities. We will use films, books, articles, small and large group discussion, and the Strengthsquest inventory to learn more ourselves and about racial and social justice, sexuality and gender justice, and interfaith work.

Session 2: White Like Me film & discussion

Time: 105 minutes

Materials: Computer and Projector with Screen or white wall, white board and markers, videos <https://youtu.be/Z6NjHOSoh1s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i58pG0pKHWY>

Before any introduction or conversation, play clip from “Cracking the Codes” with Connie Malal and Jelal Huyler (0:00-3:44)

After clip: We all have a lens (or lenses) through which we see the world. Like Connie in the video, we are proposing that we be intentional about the lenses that we use to see the world, God’s people, and the systems in which we all live. At MSU, there have been many conversations on campus this past year that began with one topic and ended at racism and white supremacy. The initial topics ranged from anti-Semitism to “My Faith is Better than Your Faith.” The reason these conversations seem to frequently end up in the same place, is that white, cis-male, heterosexual, Christian supremacy is a major contributing factor in most of the ‘isms that we discuss. Because of this, we begin with the lens of race, racism, and white supremacy, and we apply this lens to all of the conversations about justice and liberation that we have. Because there is never a time that a person of color can not think about their race in the United States of America, there should never be a time that we are not considering the deep-seated biases that are likely at play. The poem read by Jelal Huyler in the video clip illustrates this point with regard to teachers, the media, and even “steeple” or people and institutions of faith.

Please note any comments or questions about the previous video clip now. We can discuss them after we watch the next film. Likewise, make notes during the White Like Me film of any questions or comments, as well as any visceral reactions that you may have sensed within yourself.

Play White Like Me film

Discussion Questions:

Any immediate reactions that you'd like to share?

Name some examples of privilege that you have seen in your life and share when you recognized that it was a privilege that you had or didn't have.

What opportunities have you had (or not) in your life because of dominant group privilege?

How does unchecked privilege harm people of color? ...white people?

How might white people make use of their privilege to promote racial justice?

Session 3: Between the World & Me video & discussion

Time: 90 minutes

Materials: Computer, projector, screen or white wall, USB drive with video (alternately, video can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsMKQsKV9Xg>)

Play video from 14:50-59:40 (ask students to take notes as they watch, so they can remember questions or comments that come to them during the video)

Invite students to share immediate responses or feelings brought up by the video.

Coates says that our responsibility is to “resist, bottom line.” What does that mean to you? We'll talk quite a bit about identity during this retreat, but I hope this conversation will help us to always hold individual identity in tension, or at least conversation, with collective struggle.

Coates often begins his presentations explaining that his book *Between the World and Me* is a conversation with his son, and how he doesn't go out of his way to make his son feel better, because the reality is that sometimes things are just hard. Invite students to share memorable conversations that they had with their parents or with others who loved and cared for them. Are there obvious differences between those conversations with white students vs. students of color?

Share this story: One day while having a conversation with my students about racial bias in policing and the disproportionate rate of consent searches in traffic stops with people of color, an African American student simply said “wait, I thought that your car just got searched anytime you get pulled over.” I asked the other students in the class who had been in a car that was searched during a routine traffic stop. The other African American student raised her hand and not a single white student raised their hands. For further clarification, I asked the second African American student, as a percentage, how often was a car that she was in searched when she was a part of a traffic stop. She said at least 90%. I asked the white students in the room to answer the same question and they all answered zero. None of them had ever been in a car that was searched during a routine traffic stop. Without having that experience in class, many of those students might never have thought critically about issues of bias in policing, and just assumed that there is no such thing because they had never seen it. How do you think their viewpoints might have

shifted that day? Do you think that was all that was needed to move them to awareness and then advocacy?

In the video with Ta Nehisi, a student named Maya asks about the responsibility that people have to tell our stories. What do you think about the idea of having a responsibility to tell your stories? Who is that responsibility to? What are the stories (good and bad) that need to be shared from your perspective?

Invite students to respond to the question that the student asked about living without fear in a world where your life might be taken at any moment.

As we close this session, name something that you take with you in a word or phrase.

Session 4: What is Peer Ministry?

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Retreat curriculum, white board or easel pad and markers

The Peer Ministry Cohort program incorporates different areas of cultural competence and social justice, offering an opportunity for each peer minister to develop a specific set of skills designed to enhance their leadership on issues about which they care deeply. Though each peer minister will be learning about the skills and understanding necessary for their own area of cultural competence, the cohort will work together to learn about intersectionality of identities and issues and about leading others in acts of support and solidarity. A brief description of each peer ministry concentration follows:

Interfaith Peer Minister-focuses on religious diversity on campus and raising awareness of and appreciation for religious differences, as well as encouraging collaboration in the areas where there is commonality. This peer minister will assist in managing our relationship with Interfaith Youth Core and will also serve on the newly formed Interfaith Council at Missouri State University, which is being formed in cooperation with the Multicultural Resource Center with a grant from IFYC.

Racial Justice Peer Minister-focuses on issues related to racial and ethnic diversity, working to bring equity on campus and in the wider community between treatment of persons in racial minorities and treatment of persons in the majority. This peer minister will work with faculty and staff on campus, as well as local faith communities to offer programs, workshops, and conversations that raise awareness of racism, white supremacy, and privilege. This position is offered in cooperation with National Avenue Christian Church and the Mid-America Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism team of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Social Justice Peer Minister-focuses on the intersections of faith and social justice, or more broadly, the common good. This peer minister will work to connect students with opportunities to work for change on issues about which they care deeply and will serve as a student liaison to progressive advocacy groups on campus and in the local community. This peer minister will be supported by community organizers and leaders from a number of community organizations such as Jobs with Justice, Missouri Faith Voices, and others.

LGBTQ+ Community Peer Minister-focuses on spiritual support of members of the LGBTQ+ community and providing a safe space for students who identify with the spectrum to discuss the ways that they have been hurt or marginalized by organized religion. This peer minister will work to learn the basics of queer theology and methods and rituals for reclaiming the faith traditions that have been taken from many members of the LGBTQ+ community. This peer minister will be supported by resources from Alliance Q (the national Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, LGBTQ+ advocacy group), PROMO (state LGBTQ+ advocacy and policy group), and the GLO Center (Gay and Lesbian Center of the Ozarks) and will seek to work closely with members of the three LGBTQ+ student groups on campus: Spectrum, Advocates, and Melaqueer.

As members of a cohort, the peer ministers will meet together with the campus minister each week for theological reflection, training, and spiritual formation. This will allow each peer minister to feel supported by the ministry and by his or her peers, while stepping into new challenges each week. In addition to the group development as a cohort, each peer minister will have a nurture team that seeks to provide space for reflection and development on an individual basis. Each nurture team will consist of the campus minister, a clergy person/faith leader of the individual's own faith tradition, a lay person from a local congregation connected with Ekklesia, and a community organizer. Each peer minister will meet with their nurture team a minimum of once per month and will discuss their peer ministry experiences as well as their own vocational discernment.

To allow students time to process the different concentrations of the peer ministers, use the white board and invite them to brainstorm ways for each peer minister to engage the community with the issue(s) related to their role. Divide the board into three columns for each concentration: events, issues, and partners.

Following a short discussion of the individual roles, move to a conversation about the functions of all peer ministers. The following is a description of peer ministry in general:

An Ekklesia peer minister is an undergraduate student committed to advancing the conversation about the intersections of faith and life, and to building a progressive community at Missouri State University that welcomes all and works together for peace, reconciliation, and justice. On any given day, a peer minister may:

- Welcome new students with enthusiasm, empathy, and grace
- Be a conversation partner to students who are struggling to adapt to college life, or those who are asking big questions about their own faith and life (this is not counseling, this is just being a friend)
- Provide referrals to campus ministry staff, campus counseling services, and Title IX office, as necessary, and offer accompaniment for any student who needs it
- Enthusiastically promote Ekklesia religious services, discussion groups, service opportunities, and social events to students in their own circles and campus-wide
- Plan and promote events in collaboration with other student groups, campus ministries, and university departments and offices

Invite students to ask questions and discuss these expectations and offer their own suggestions for inclusion to the list.

The following assumptions underlie the work and expectations of all Ekklesia peer ministers:

- Faith through a lens of liberation theology
- Connection to the local church & the community
- We live in a broken world that we believe God desires to make whole with our help (co-creators with God)
- Much of the injustice in our world is systemic (powers and principalities)
- Faith is relational
- Words matter (just language)

These will all be discussed in greater detail in the next session.

Session 5: History and Theological Foundations of our Ministry

Time: 60 minutes

Ekklesia is an ecumenical, progressive, Christian ministry that welcomes students and others across campus who are Jesus followers, seekers, doubters, interfaith advocates, and people of all ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. We strive to make our campus and world a more just, loving, and peaceful place through critical thought, prophetic action, and authentic spirituality. While the name Ekklesia is only a few years old, the ministry (formally United Ministries in Higher Education) is nearly 60 years old. It was born of the ecumenical student movement of the 1950s and 60s.

At the time of UMHE's formation, there were hundreds of ecumenical campus ministries popping up at Universities across the US, but within a decade or two, most would close for lack of funding. Our story is different though. The leadership of UMHE were so committed to ecumenical campus ministry, and to being a progressive religious voice on campus, that they faithfully led the ministry through lean and tumultuous times to the place where we are today. The ministry is on solid financial ground as is working to rebuild our historic affiliations with local churches and denominational bodies.

What do we mean by ecumenical? Ekklesia is committed to unity within the Christian faith, across the doctrinal and theological differences that divide us. We believe that we can learn from our differences and that our commonalities provide plenty of space from which to worship and work together. We have been historically supported by four mainline Christian denominations: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church (USA). We attempt to maintain those connections both at the local church and the general church (usually national) level. It is important to us that we be multi-denominational, not non-denominational. We believe that our various denominational connections allow us to build unique programs that highlight the best of our partner denominations. For example, Presbyterians have excellent worship resources, the UCC great social justice resources, the ELCA a strong national campus ministry network, and the DOC has prepared in-depth anti-racism/pro-reconciliation resources. By focusing on the strengths of our partner denominations, we remain connected to the larger church and we honor

the work of those who built and continue to build the organizations with which we are connected.

What do we mean by progressive? For a baseline definition of progressive Christianity, we turn to Hal Taussig, author of *A New Spiritual Home: Progressive Christianity at the Grass Roots*. The following is what Taussig has called “The Five Characteristics of Progressive Christianity”:

1. A spiritual vitality and expressiveness. The wide-range of churches and groups in this movement—in contrast to the traditional liberal Christians—are not just heady social activists and intellectuals. They like expressing themselves spiritually in meditation, prayer, artistic forms, and lively worship. It is astonishing how similar these spiritual and worship expressions are, even though they come from widely different denominations and parts of the United States. *A New Spiritual Home* details five aspects of this new spiritual vitality: participatory worship, expressive and arts-infused worship and programming, a reclaiming of discarded ancient Christian rituals (for example, baptismal immersion and anointing with oil), a wide variety of non-Christian rituals and meditation techniques, and development of small groups for spiritual growth and nurture.

2. An insistence on Christianity with intellectual integrity. This new kind of Christian expression is devoted to and nourished by a wide-ranging intellectual curiosity and critique. It interrogates Christian assumptions and traditions in order to reframe, reject, or renew them. God language, the relationship between science and religion, and post-modern consciousness are the major arenas of this intellectual rigor.

3. A transgression of traditional gender boundaries. These groups are explicitly and thoroughly committed to feminism and affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. The feminism is regularly a part of new kinds of family and child-rearing dynamics. The extent of gay-friendliness is illustrated by at least seven national Christian movements devoted to support of GLBTs and rooted in thousands of local churches.

4. The belief that Christianity can be vital without claiming to be the best or the only true religion. In contrast to mainstream Christianity’s lukewarm “tolerance” of other religions, progressive Christianity pro-actively asserts that it is not the best or the only. Progressive Christians take pains to claim simultaneously their own Christian faith and their support of the complete validity of other religions.

5. Strong ecological and social justice commitments. The longstanding Christian interest in aiding those who suffer or are poor is continued in progressive Christianity. Similarly, this new movement is committed to old style liberal social justice programming and peace advocacy. In addition, however, there is a passion for environmentalism, including explicit attention to changing lifestyle and consumer patterns in order to lessen the human footprint on the Earth.

Taussig differentiates grassroots progressive Christianity from “reactionary evangelicals or the frightened mainstream institutions.” We acknowledge our connection to both, thus we come at this endeavor with curiosity and humility. As a ministry that welcomes all people, situated firmly in the bible belt, and on a campus where a majority of students come from very conservative,

often rural, churches, we cultivate an environment that encourages more questions than answers and we trust God, the communal discernment process, and our own divinely inspired hearts and minds to lead us down faithful paths. We also acknowledge the frightened mainline institutions from which our ministry was born, and we seek to develop our own spiritual and religious understandings in relationship with those institutions, in the hope that they and we can all be better individual Christians and a better Church.

As a ministry, we operate with a set of underlying assumptions, or theological and anthropological claims, if you will. As noted in the previous session, those claims are:

- Faith through a lens of liberation theology-there are many definitions of liberation theology that may be helpful here, but the one we'll use for the sake of this discussion comes from catholicculture.com and simply states that it "makes criticism of oppression essential to the task of theology." In other words, a major aim of the Christian faith is to see the economic, social, and political liberation of oppressed and marginalized peoples. Rather than focus on individual salvation that serves as a ticket to some heavenly eternal realm, we believe that Jesus called us to work to realize the kingdom of heaven on earth, while we're still inhabiting it.
- Connection to the local church & the community-we acknowledge our historical connection to the Church and to multiple local churches and desire to continue those relationships through worship and other events. We hope to prepare leaders for a future church, that may or may not look like the one that we know right now.
- We live in a broken world that we believe God desires to make whole with our help-we believe that God created us in love and wholeness and that God desires for us to live in that wholeness. We live in a world where sinful choices, individual and communal continue to result in violence and injustice. God invites us to join God in working for peace and justice among God's people.
- Much of the injustice in our world is systemic (powers and principalities)-much of the sin and injustice that we see in our daily lives is systemic and institutional. Our faith calls us to resist systems of injustice and to challenge institutions on their oppression of "others"
- Faith is relational-we don't do this alone. As individuals, we come to know what it is to be in relationship to God and to one another in communities (usually multiple). As Christians we practice our faith among other Christians, and in a world where there are many other faith expressions, and people with no faith expression. We believe that we can learn about ourselves and our faith from all of those people and traditions. Likewise, we believe that our "salvation" is bound up with others. As Fannie Lou Hamer wisely said, "nobody's free until everybody's free."

- Words matter (just language)-when we know better, we do better. At least that's our hope. We recognize that words have been used to do serious harm to people and we don't want to perpetuate that harm. We will constantly strive to improve our language, to make it more inclusive and life-giving. We will listen when others tell us how words hurt them, even when we don't understand why. (make a list with students of words that are discriminatory or hurtful and what some alternatives may be--note that it is possible that some words or phrases need no replacement and should just be retired from use)

Session 6: Organizing as a Tool for Liberation

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Handout at Appendix C, whiteboard and markers

“For some reason, God doesn't want to change the world without us. Sometimes we are waiting on God, and God is waiting on us. When we ask God to move a mountain, God might give us a shovel. The Gospel is not just about ideas, it's about action; Jesus does not just offer us a presentation of ideas, but an invitation to join a movement.” Shane Claiborne, activist and author

For this session, we turn to a conversation about the ways that God is calling us to action as an expression of our faith. Let's begin with a story.

One day a group of villagers was working in the fields by a river. Suddenly someone noticed a baby floating downstream. A woman rushed out and rescued the baby, brought it to shore and cared for it. During the next several days, more babies were found floating downstream, and the villagers rescued them as well. But before long there was a steady stream of babies floating downstream. Soon the whole village was involved in the many tasks of rescue work: pulling these poor children out of the stream, ensuring they were properly fed, clothed, and housed, and integrating them into the life of the village. While not all the babies, now very numerous, could be saved, the villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they did.

Before long, however, the village became exhausted with all this rescue work. Some villagers suggested they go upstream to discover how all these babies were getting into the river in the first place. Had a mysterious illness stricken these poor children? Had the shoreline been made unsafe by an earthquake? Was some hateful person throwing them in deliberately? Was an even more exhausted village upstream abandoning them out of hopelessness?

A huge controversy erupted in the village. One group argued that every possible hand was needed to save the babies since they were barely keeping up with the current flow. The other group argued that if they found out how those babies were getting into the water further upstream, they could repair the situation up there that would save all the babies and eliminate the need for those costly rescue operations downstream.

“Don't you see,” cried some, “if we find out how they're getting in the river, we can stop the problem and no babies will drown? By going upstream, we can eliminate the cause of the problem!”

“But it’s too risky,” said the village elders. “It might fail. It’s not for us to change the system. And besides, how would we occupy ourselves if we no longer had this to do?”

This story highlights a dilemma experienced by many people of good faith and conscience. We want to help, and we rarely know the best ways to do that. Is it direct service (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc.) or is it finding root causes and working to eradicate them? People have varying opinions on this, and certainly have feelings about the way that churches should be involved when it comes to advocating for change in the policies that keep people in poverty and sickness.

Walk through the “Upstream” exercise printed on the back of the Babies in the River handout (Appendix C). Choose an issue that the students care about and talk about the symptoms of the problem (the babies in the river). Identify the efforts that are currently at work to resolve the situation. Then identify who or what is “upstream.” What are the roots of the problem? Who benefits from the system the way it is? Who are the decision makers that can bring change? Who are the influencers who have power over those decision makers?

Liberation only comes when somebody goes upstream and deals with the root of the problem. Because the people who generally care to do something are also the ones being oppressed by the system, it takes a lot of organized people power to come up against the forces that are maintaining the status quo, which is usually organized money power. Broad based grassroots organizing provides a vehicle for ordinary people to effect change.

For an example of the ways that organized people can win out over organized money, read pp. 17-18 in *Transforming Communities*. This is the story of Jason Sole organizing youth to speak out against a planned \$68m juvenile prison. It is an inspiring reminder of the power of ordinary (and even disenfranchised) people to effect change by sharing their stories and demanding a seat at the table. Discuss with students any similar efforts that they have seen. What has worked, what didn’t? Can they imagine such a tactic working on some important issue that they are thinking about today?

According to the authors of *Faith Rooted Organizing*, community transformation requires “courageous organizing and persistent strategic advocacy.” They define organizing as “the practice of bringing people together to create systemic change in their community.” Advocacy is “the process of calling on leaders (whether corporate or governmental) to make public commitments to use their power in ways that respond accurately and effectively to the needs of those affected by their decisions.” Organizing and advocacy are tools that can be used to help the people closest to the pain participate in their own liberation and make their communities better for themselves and others.

Invite students to name organizing efforts at the national and local level and to share their observations. Then invite students to imagine what sort of organizing effort they can envision gaining traction with students that they know to address issues about which they care deeply.

Session 7: Identities, Social Location, and Intersectionality

Time: 60 minutes

Who am I? Who are you? Where are we? What are the factors that have shaped our worldviews? What are the intersections between our identities and the issues that matter to us? How can we use this information to better understand ourselves and our environment? How can we use this information to build communities of peace and justice?

Let's begin with some definitions:

For the purposes of this conversation, we'll think of identity as a list of roles, affiliations, and convictions that make us who we are and influence our beliefs and actions. It should be noted that while our identity influences our beliefs and actions, our beliefs and actions in turn influence our identity. For instance, being a mother has caused me to look at the world through a lens that is very different from my pre-parent self and has led me to believe certain things about the world. However, the things that I have come to believe about the world have, over time, influenced the way that I understand my role as a mother. Identity, then, isn't a static description that will remain the same for all time, rather it is a dynamic understanding of self in relation to the world and to others. Likewise, at different points in our lives, different identities will be central to our understanding of self. Many of you will continue to be students for a lifetime of learning, but it's likely that six years from now, your identity as a student will not be as central to your being as it is in this moment. We'll do more work with identity in the last session, but for now, just take a moment to think of some of the ways that you identify and share three with someone near you.

As we think about identity, let's take a look at your Strengthsquest survey results. Go around the room and have students share their top 5 strengths, what surprised them about their results, and what they intuitively knew about themselves already. "At its fundamentally flawed core, the aim of almost any learning program is to help us become who we are *not*." This peer ministry training, on the other hand, is designed to be intentional about helping our student staff become who you *are*.

Social location is similar to identity in some ways. It is typically understood to relate to a set group of factors that include: race/ethnicity, religion, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender, ability, and age. While identity describes one's understanding of self, social location describes where a person fits into the social order based on elements of one's identity. With each factor in social location, a person will have more or less privilege in society. As a white, able bodied, Christian in the United States, I have a great deal of privilege. On the other hand, as a lesbian woman, I also lack privilege in many settings.

Intersectionality is the ways that our identities and social location work for and against us, and the ways that the issues that we experience because of our identities and social location overlap with issues experienced by others due to their identities and social location. Thinking of identity and social location in intersectional terms leads to us to advocate for the needs and rights of others who have different struggles than we do, because we understand in our own way what it is to be denied rights and basic needs. The NAACP demonstrated this kind of solidarity some years ago when they began to explicitly name sexual orientation as a category for which basic civil rights were being denied. Intersectional understandings of issues of justice in our communities

make us stronger because we begin to show up for one another in solidarity and self-preservation.

Take a few moments to see how students are doing with the concepts of identity, social location and intersectionality. Then share the following story:

A few years ago, I was teaching a class where I met a young woman named Soona. Soona was a 19-year-old from Afghanistan. She had only been in the US for a few days when she first spoke in a class discussion about the ways that our geographical location has provided a specific lens for which to view the world. Most of the students in the class had spent the majority of their lives within 100 miles of the classroom where they were now sitting. Soona was the exception. As the students shared that they mostly thought of their worldview as the correct one and had never encountered a situation that made them question that, Soona shared a very different experience. Shyly, she said to the class, “A few days ago, I got on a plane in a place where everyone I knew was Muslim, and the overarching belief among them was that if you were not Muslim, you would go to hell. Then I got off a plane in a place where, as far as I can tell, most people are Christian, and believe that if you are not Christian, you are going to hell. I’m not sure what to do with that. The people in both places seem intelligent, kind, and faithful, but they can’t both be right.”

Ask students how they might have responded to Soona’s story. Remind students of the portion of the Coates video where Ta Nehisi talks about the difference between being in France and being in America, and not having to worry about his son being shot on the subway. Discuss times when they have experienced some sort of similar dissonance regarding something they believed to be true, but then encountered others who believe something completely different. Are there people on our campus who may be experiencing the same sort of dissonance? And if so, how can we provide hospitality and a space for processing that might help them to better adapt to life on our campus? List ideas on the white board.

Session 8: Storytelling for Social Change

Time: 90 minutes

Materials: Handout and training manual at Appendix D

For this session, we will use the training “Creating Shared Story: Story of Us & Now” adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University. A full copy of the training is at Appendix D. Facilitator will further adapt the training to shorten the breakout/practice portion of the training as necessary to fit the time slot and leave time for feedback.

Session 9: Identifying Justice Issues on Campus and in the Community

Time: 60 minutes

“Organization means hope for people. It means making their institutions relevant. But most of all, organization means power. It means being able to do something about things they’ve been frustrated about all their lives.” Ernesto Cortes, Industrial Areas Foundation

How, then, do we choose which “things” to work on? There are two important skills to be learned here: listening and “cutting an issue.” You’re probably thinking you already know how to listen, so we should move on to the second one. However, we’re going to spend a little time talking about listening, and you may discover that it’s a skill that needs practice.

In community organizing, as in ministry, the foundational building block is the one-to-one conversation. As peer ministers, you’ll be tasked with completing a particular number of 1-1s each week. There are multiple reasons for this. First, we hope to get to know more students on campus and learn about the issues that they care about. Second, it is a skill that you can take with you into any career path and it will make you a better employee, boss, and/or co-worker. And finally, to build a movement for peace and justice on campus and in the community, we have to learn about and connect through the self-interest of those to whom we talk and listen.

We all know the basic rules for good listening that we learn in communications classes. Have students name some of those tips: make eye contact, lean forward toward the speaker, don’t do other things, ask clarifying questions, listen to understand--not to respond, etc.

In organizing, as well as in ministry, we are listening for particular clues when having a 1-1 conversation. Some of the things that we are listening for are: passion, discontent, concern, joy, and longing. By listening for these things, we can ask better questions to help get to the goal of the conversation. What in this person’s story connects them to the ministry, the justice work, or a particular issue that we are working on? Once that connection is made, we can imagine together the ways that we can work together to bring transformation.

When we are in conversation with others, we will likely identify what they see as “problems” in the community. Problems are often broad with no obvious fix, like homelessness or poverty. The task of organizing is to “cut” problems up into “issues” that we can address. Perhaps an issue related to poverty is a lack of living wage jobs in an area. A group wanting to work on that issue can determine a course of action that is possible to achieve in a given time frame. In the state of Missouri, we just passed an increase in the minimum wage over the next several years. In order to do this, there was a ballot initiative where hundreds of thousands of signatures had to be obtained to put the issue on the ballot for the people to vote on it. Numerous grassroots groups worked to collect those signatures to get minimum wage on the ballot. This is just one way that organizers have worked to decrease the problem of poverty. This one change, by itself, won’t end poverty, but it has the potential to make a dent. Meanwhile, grassroots groups can shift their focus and cut another piece of the “issue pie.”

Let’s practice both listening and identifying an issue. Pair up with another student and each of you respond to the question “(other than your studies) what keeps you up at night?” Give each student 2 minutes to share and one minute for the conversation partner to ask clarifying questions. Invite each group to share any problems that were identified. Look for repetition in the problems being named. Choose one that was named two or more times and attempt to cut an issue within that problem.

Session 10: Liberating Sexuality and Gender

Time: 90 minutes

As we seek to build progressive community on the campus of Missouri State and to practice our faith as a liberating force, we must turn to issues of oppression based on sexual orientation and gender, gender identity and/or gender expression. As the only campus ministry that is welcoming and affirming of students who identify as LGBTQ+, we are likely to encounter students who have suffered great harms in the name of God, Jesus, and Christianity. It is our hope that we can provide a safe space for processing, healing, and for LGBTQ+ individuals to hear the voice of God's calling in their own lives.

There is likely no one in this room who would argue that the Christian church has done a good job talking about human sexuality. Miguel de la Torre writes in his book *Liberating Sexuality: Justice Between the Sheets*, that "oppressive social structures, rooted in a two thousand-year-old misunderstanding of Christian sexuality, prevent us from a more just social order."

Invite students to share the things they learned about sex and sexuality at home or in church. What did you find helpful? What was harmful to you or others that you knew? What do you wish now someone would have said to you then? Is there a way to honor differing sexual orientations and gender identities without throwing out Christianity and the Bible?

De La Torre suggests that both the conservative and liberal views of sex and sexuality are inadequate and offers instead a "liberative methodology that seriously considers liberation theology." We're going to take a look at what he comes up with in an effort to "develop a sexual ethics influenced by those who reside on the margins of power and privilege." Read together the chapter entitled *Orthoeros: A Biblically-Based Sexual Ethic* and discuss. Give students 15 minutes to reflect, pray, and to write out their own personal sexual ethic. Invite students to share as they feel comfortable.

Now that we have spent some time connecting our understanding of gender and sexuality with our faith and person experience, let's turn to a discussion on the way that Ekklesia can be a healing and safe space where students can wrestle with their own beliefs and develop their own healthy understanding of human sexuality through the dual lens of faith and justice.

Review Allyship handout from Austen Hartke (Appendix E). Discuss the suggestions on the handout for individuals and for churches (ministries) and create a plan for implementation for the upcoming year.

Session 11: Interfaith Work at Missouri State University

Time: 150 minutes

For this session, we will use a curriculum that I created in collaboration with Interfaith Youth Core staff specifically for the MSU campus. The workshop is designed to be 3 hours long, but time can be cut at the beginning and end due to this group already knowing each other and having specific goals that they are already working toward. The full curriculum can be found at Appendix F.

Appendix B: Upstream Exercise

The River in Missouri

Upstream Forces

Babies in the River

Strategies for Change

CREATING SHARED STORY: Story of Us & Now

Who is this community and what are we called to do?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the restrictions below. This workshop guide has been developed over the course of many trainings by Liz Pallatto, Joy Cushman, Jake Waxman, Devon Anderson, Rachel Anderson, Adam Yalowitz, Kate Hilton, Lenore Palladino, New Organizing Institute staff, MoveOn Organizers, Center for Community Change staff, Jose Luis Morantes, Carlos Saavedra, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Shuya Ohno, Petra Falcon, Michele Rudy, Hope Wood, Kristen Dore and many others.

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Story of US and Now

Goals for this session:

- * To learn how to tell the story of our community in a way that reflects our shared values, hope, and experiences
- *To learn to tell a story that motivates others to join us in a specific action now
- *Each participant practices telling a Story of Us and Now and gets feedback on their story

Linking Story of Self and Story of Us and Now

A story of self tells people who you are and why you are called to do the work that you are doing. On its own, the story of self is insufficient to set the stage for collective action. Since organizing is about building power with others for shared action, your public narrative also needs to tell a story of the new community you're forming together with others, and a story of the action you are asking others to join you in taking.



The Character in the story of us and now is the community or organization you are building.

Our story of self is interwoven with stories we share with others through the communities and organizations we are a part of, which have stories of their own. These include stories of our family, community, faith tradition, school, profession, movements, organizations, nations and, perhaps world. It is through shared stories that we establish the identities and express the values of the communities in which we participate (family, faith, nation) and of the new communities we are forming (new social movements, new organizations, new neighborhoods).

Telling a "story of us" requires learning how to put into narrative form the specific experiences that the "us" in the room share with each other. Telling a "story of us" is a way to engage a community in acting together, based on values that we share as a community. When we tell stories that reflect in images the challenges we face and the possibilities we may achieve together in detail, we begin to build new community and new organization around values rather than just issues or interests alone.

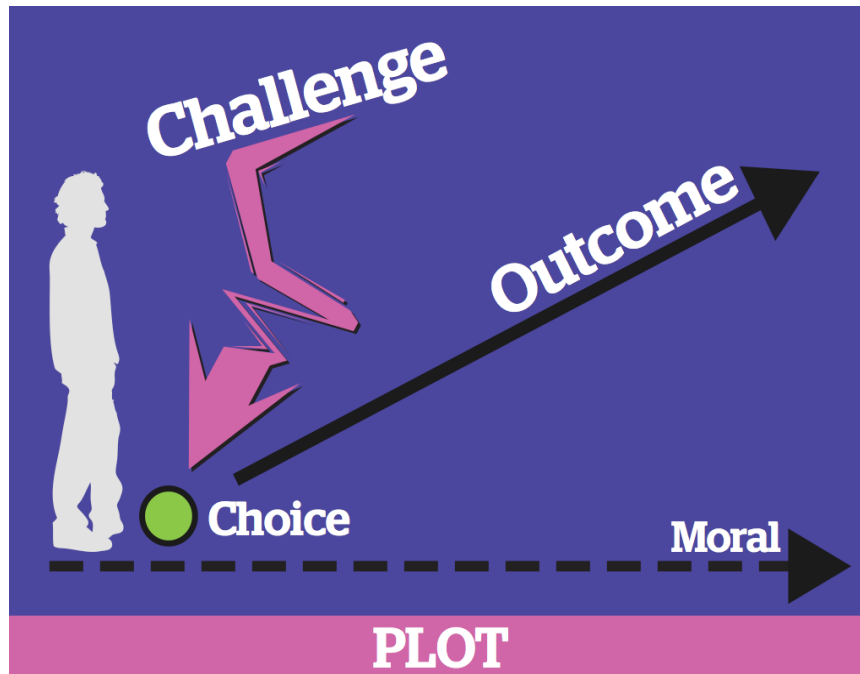
The Story of Now describes an urgent challenge of your community, a hopeful vision of what life could be, and a specific ask to act towards realizing that vision now.

Now we know why you've been called to a particular mission, we know something of who it is you want to call upon to join you in that mission, so what action does that mission require of you right here, right now, in this place?

A "story of now" is urgent, it requires dropping other things and paying attention, it is rooted in the values you celebrated in your stories of self and us and requires action.

Narrative Structure: Challenge, Choice, Outcome

Remember the story structure we introduced in telling your Story of Self?



Just like in your Story of Self, your Story of Us and Now has a clear challenge, choice and outcome:

The Challenge: The challenges your community has faced in the past, or faces now (made real with stories, images, and details, not statistics).

The Outcome (hope): Stories with vivid images and detail that remind your community of what you've already achieved together in the past, AND stories that create a vision of what specifically you could achieve in the future if you act together now.

The Choice: A specific, actionable, strategic choice that you can ask others to make to join your community in action RIGHT NOW. (Like signing up to volunteer or getting on the phone right now to recruit 2 more people to join them at the next event.)

Your story needs to be urgent; it requires dropping other things and paying attention, it is rooted in the values you celebrated in your story of self and us and requires action now.

Why It Matters

The choice we're called on to make is a choice to commit to strategic action now. Leaders who only describe problems but fail to identify a way to act and bring others together to address the problem, aren't very good leaders. If you are called to address a real challenge, a challenge so urgent you have motivated us to face it as well, then you also have a responsibility to invite us to join you in action that has some chance of success. A 'story of now' is not simply a call to make a choice to act – it is a call to "hopeful" action—action with a clear strategy behind it that we believe can make a difference.

Stories begin shifting power relationships by building new community and new capacity

Often after we've heard others' stories of self and we've started building relationships together we discover that we face similar challenges that are rooted in very deep systems of power inequality. Learning to tell stories of Us is a way to begin to join our stories together and acknowledge those shared challenges and the roots of the problem as a community. However, a good story of us doesn't just convey the root of our challenges, but also lifts up our heroes, and stories of even small successes. Those stories give us hope that if we come together and take action as a community, we can uproot some of the underlying causes of our suffering.

When you tell a powerful Story of Now and ask others to make a specific choice to join you in action, you are beginning to build new power together from the community around you to address the challenges in your lives.

Often after we've heard others' stories of self and we've started building relationships together we discover that we face similar challenges that are rooted in very deep systems of power inequality. Learning to tell stories of Us is a way to begin to join our stories together and acknowledge those shared challenges and the roots of the problem as a community. However, a good story of us doesn't just convey the root of our challenges, but also lifts up our heroes, and stories of even small successes. Those stories give us hope that if we come together and take action as a community, we can uproot some of the underlying causes of our suffering.

When you tell a powerful Story of Now and ask others to make a specific choice to join you in action, you are beginning to build new power together from the community around you to address the challenges in your lives.

Tying Together all of the Pieces into a Successful Public Narrative

As Rabbi Hillel's powerful words suggest, to stand for yourself is the first step, but insufficient on its own. You must also find or create a community to stand with, and that community must begin acting now. To combine the stories of Self, Us and Now, you have to find the link between why you are called to this mission, why we as a community are called to this mission, and what our mission calls on us to do now.

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? When I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?”

—Hillel, 1st century
Jerusalem sage Pirke Avo

That linking may require you to continually rethink the stories of self, us, and now that you are working on.

Storytelling is a dynamic, non-linear process.

Each time you tell your story you will adapt it – to make yourself clearer, to adjust to a different audience, to locate yourself in a different context. As you develop a story of us, you may find you want to alter your story of self, especially as you begin to see the relationship between the two more clearly. Similarly, as you develop a story of now, you may find it affects what went before. And, as you go back to reconsider what went before, you may find it alters your story of now.

Storytelling takes practice.

Our goal this weekend is not to leave with a final “script” of your public narrative that you will use over and over again during your campaign. The goal is to help you learn a process by which you can generate your narrative over and over and over again, when, where, and how you need to in order to motivate yourself and others to specific, strategic action.



TEAM BREAKOUT SESSION: STORY OF US AND NOW PRACTICE

GOALS

- (1) Develop a Story of US & NOW.
- (2) Learn how to integrate a story about the community and team you’re building this weekend and an urgent call to action that will inspire your audience to join your community in making change.

Coach others’ stories by listening carefully, offering feedback, and asking questions.

Agenda

TOTAL TIME: 70 min.

1. Gather in your team. Nominate 1 person to be a timekeeper. 5 min.
2. Take some time as a group to brainstorm the Story of US. 10 min.
 - What experiences during the training have had the greatest impact on you and your team?
 - What have you seen and heard this weekend that demonstrate this community’s values and commitment (e.g. people’s stories, ways we have stuck together, moments of courage, etc.)?
 - What about this community would inspire others to join US?

3. Take some time as individuals to silently develop your Story of US & NOW. Use the worksheet that follows 10 min.
4. As a team, go around the group and tell your story one by one. Be sure your facilitator tells their 3-minute Story of US & NOW first. 40 min.

For each person:
 - 3 minutes to tell their Story of US & NOW
 - 3 minutes to offer feedback from the group
5. Record your key learnings as a group. What did you take away? 5 min



WORKSHEET: STORY OF US AND NOW

The purpose of the Story of US & NOW is to create a sense of community and invite your audience to join the community in taking action and making a difference. Your goal is to tell a story that:

1. evokes our shared values and what unites us,
2. shows the challenge we face that make action urgent,
3. gives us hope that we can make specific change, and
4. invites us to join the community in taking action now.

Use these questions to help you put together your Story of US & NOW.

Who is the US you want people to feel a part of? What common values do we share? What have we experiences through this training?

What is the challenge the US faces? Make the challenge real with images and stories, not facts.

What does the US hope for? Where does that hope come from? How do we know that we can make change? What images of the future do you have that reflect how things could be different?

What specific choice are you asking others to make? What is our strategy? What specific action do we need others to join us in taking?

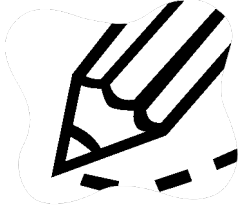


COACHING TIPS: STORY OF US AND NOW

Remember to start with positive feedback FIRST and then move into what could be improved. **Focus on asking questions instead of giving advice.** The purpose is to coach, not judge or criticize; listen fully to offer ways that the storytelling could be improved.

Coaching Questions

- US: How did the storyteller make the “us” real? Who is the “us” in the story”? Was it clear what values are shared by the “us” and what unites the “us”?
- CHALLENGE: What were the specific challenges described in the story? How were those challenges made most vivid? What details, images, and emotions would make the challenges even more real?
- HOPE / OUTCOME: What specific outcome did the story point to? What details and images made that hopeful outcome real? What specific images, values, and emotions most inspired hope?
- CHOICE: Was there a clear choice? What specific action did they ask you to choose to join them in now? Was there urgency (does it need to be done now or can it wait a year)? How did they show that making the choice would make a difference?
- Were there sections of the story that had especially good details or images (e.g. sights, sounds, smells or emotions)? How did those details make you feel as a listener?
- What were you left wondering? What questions do they need to answer? What suggestions do you have for specific improvements?



WORKSHEET:
COACHING YOUR TEAMMATES' STORIES OF US & NOW

Record Feedback/Comments from Your Team Members On Your Story Here:

Coaching Your Team's "Story of Us & Now" As you hear each other's stories, keeping track of the details of each person's story will help you to provide feedback and remember details about people on your team later. Use the grid below to track your team's stories.

NAME	WHAT WERE THE VALUES OF THE US?	WHAT WAS THE CHALLENGE TO THE US?	WHAT CHOICE WAS GIVEN?	WHAT OUTCOME COULD WE ACHIEVE?

Next Steps in LGBTQ+ Allyship



For individuals:

- Educate yourself on the basics, and then keep going!
- Start using inclusive language
- Practice interrupting negative conversation
- Be vocal about your support
- Get involved in policy change
- Offer to help LGBTQ+ people navigate possibly unsafe spaces
- Donate to organizations headed by LGBTQ+ people

For churches:

- | | |
|---|---|
| - Create a gender-neutral restroom | - Create an advocacy group that will commit to dialogue with your synod and the ELCA as a whole on LGBTQ+ inclusion |
| - Include sexuality and gender identity in your nondiscrimination policy | - Hold a liturgy for Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov. 20th) |
| - Use inclusive language in your sermons, bulletins, fliers, etc. | - Offer continuing education classes |
| - Create an outreach plan that helps explain what your church is doing to welcome LGBTQ+ people | - Have a presence at your nearest Pride celebration |
| - Start letter-writing campaigns and get involved in political advocacy as a group | - Encourage participation and leadership of LGBTQ+ people |
| - Make sure all leaders (youth leaders, especially) and greeters are educated on LGBTQ+ issues | - Keep LGBTQ+ faith resources in the church library |
| - Include queer theology texts in your teaching, preaching, and Bible studies | - Offer marriage counseling for same-sex partners |
| - Include Bible stories of gender/sexuality minorities in youth curricula | - Have liturgy available for same-sex marriages, and for a name change and remembrance of baptism for trans folks |
| - Include LGBTQ+ ally training in your new member classes | |

Taking Stock of Your LGBTQ+ Allyship



Education

What steps has your congregation taken to become more knowledgeable about sexuality and gender identity?

Conversation

What kind of spaces has your congregation made for internal conversations about LGBTQ+ issues?

Consensus

Has your congregation personally written any kind of statement of welcome that includes LGBTQ+ people?

Connection

Is your congregation part of a nationwide program (Reconciling in Christ, Reconciling Works, etc.) that can assist you in moving forward?

Follow-Through

What programs and action steps is your congregation taking for LGBTQ+ folks each week/month/year?

Creating an Inclusive Campus Culture

A workshop on religious and worldview diversity for faculty, staff, and student leaders.

Context: Missouri State University is the only public university in Missouri with a Public Affairs Mission. Because of this unique designation, MSU works to include the three pillars of the mission into every student’s education. The pillars are ethical decision making, cultural competence, and community engagement. Our campus ministry, Ekklesia, continues to stress to administrators, faculty, and staff that successful navigation of any of the three pillars necessitates at least a basic understanding of religious and worldview diversity. Because of our partnership with the Public Affairs office, we’ve been able to provide several IFYC speakers as the keynote for the Public Affairs Conference. MSU also holds an annual Collaborative Diversity Conference that includes more Interfaith conversation each year. We hope to build on the work that is already being done to give individuals the tools they need to embrace worldview diversity in their particular roles on campus.

Implementation: Ekklesia is currently working with the Multicultural Programs office on an IFYC Campus Innovation Grant to fund the development of an Interfaith Council. This workshop is intended to be the initial training for members of the council as well as all student leaders in the residence halls. It will also be offered to a group of faculty and staff who are members of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. The workshop will be made available to any campus group that requests it. Understanding that we aren’t likely to get 3 hours for a training with most groups, we will work to identify key parts of the workshop that are most impactful in our context, that we can fit into a one hour training.

Materials Needed: 20 chairs in semi-circle, laptop, projector, screen or flat white surface, whiteboard or butcher paper and markers, 20 copies of Identity Gears and Bias handout, timer

Learning Goals: Participants in this workshop will

- name the types of diversity that they see on campus
- reflect on their own identities and the ways that those identities contribute to their worldviews.
- learn through personal story about bias and its power when left unchecked.
- practice dialogue with someone whose worldview is different than theirs.
- explore how shared values creates space for cooperation and shared service.
- identify resources available to students and others struggling to connect.

Workshop Schedule:

0:00-0:20 Bridge Module 1 Introduction/Space Setting

0:20-1:00 Bridge Module 2 Why We Should Talk About Worldview
1:00-1:30 Bridge Module 3.1 Personal Reflection Exercise (Identity Gears & Discussion)
1:30-1:45 Break
1:45-2:45 Exploring Bias and Moving Toward Shared Values

Begin with Bridge Module 5.1 Bias Case study then move to small group discussions focused on the following items: identify bias on campus; list resources available to help struggling students; brainstorm shared values in the group, on campus, in the community; list cooperative efforts that could come out of those shared values; identify who is willing to keep working toward those efforts; list individuals interested in further training to become an Interfaith leader. Small groups report out.

2:45-3:00 Wrap-up, evaluate, resources for further engagement

BRIDGE Workshop Module 1



Introductions/ Space Setting

Time for this module is approximately 20 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

You should begin any Workshop you choose with these two activities in order to establish rapport, the goals of the experience, and the community agreements for civil discourse.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Make sure you have a place to write the community agreements (a whiteboard or butcher paper will do).

GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Begin to build a sense of shared vision for worldview engagement
- ▶ Foster a community feeling through introductions and space-setting

➔ WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and share your professional (and personal if you feel so inclined) interest in building worldview engagement into your work as a campus professional. You should also model openness to the topic by letting participants know your worldview identity. Feel free to share a personal story here to help people understand your motivations for doing this work.

Invite everyone present to quickly share their names, role(s) on campus, and if they feel comfortable, their worldview. Transition into the content:

Tell participants: The BRIDGE Workshops are designed to open wider conversation about worldview diversity in our work with students and introduce you to the experience of interfaith relationship building.

Our goal today is to understand why talking about worldview matters and that we have existing interpersonal skills to call upon to help us do so.

SPACE SETTING EXERCISE: COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS, GROUND RULES, ETC. (10 minutes)

This is when the participants come into the conversation fully. The process of setting the space is as important as the guidelines the group develops. Start by introducing the exercise.

Tell participants: As we get into the workshop experience, it's important to be intentional about how we're going to show up in the space.

Let's begin by determining some ground rules for how we will interact with one another. So, I put the question to you—what do you need from one another to be able to talk about your worldview openly and honestly?

Aim for a list of 6-10 ground rules or community agreements. Examples include:

- ▶ Speak from your own perspective, not for your entire tradition (I Statements)
- ▶ Assume good intentions
- ▶ Respect confidentiality
- ▶ Own your intentions and your impact
- ▶ Avoid generalizations (about people or worldviews)
- ▶ Seek to understand and be understood

Tell participants: We should note that the purpose here is not to keep the conversation shallow, but respectful and free from harm. Does everyone feel they can abide by the guidelines put forth by the group, and hold yourselves accountable to doing so?

Wait for confirmation from the group, if there are any people who are clearly not on board, pause to clarify what needs to be reframed.

Tell participants: Hopefully we're all on the same page about the shared experience we want to have! Now let's transition into the content of our workshop.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!

BRIDGE Workshop Module 2



Why We Should Talk About Worldview

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Print copies of the Glossary of Terms to hand out at the beginning of the workshop. Familiarize yourself with the terms (you will only be presenting a few of them formally in the beginning, the rest are for reference).
- ▶ Cue videos 2.3 and 8.3 at www.ifyc.org/interfaith-leadership/course-modules/.

GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Begin to build a sense of shared ownership over worldview engagement on campus
- ▶ Identify the civic goods of pluralism

➔ WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Tell participants: The BRIDGE Workshops are designed to open a wider conversation about worldview diversity in your work with students and introduce you to the experience of interfaith relationship building.

Our goal is to understand why talking about worldview matters, and that we have existing interpersonal skills to call upon to be able to do so. We just need to practice.

📄 BRIEF DEFINITIONS (10 minutes)

Distribute the Glossary of Terms handout

Tell participants: Clear understanding of terms is essential whenever engaging identity and worldview. In order to achieve that clarity, I am going to formally present a few key terms but this is the only time in the workshop that I will present in such a formal way. I know I'm going through a lot of information! Feel free to stop me when you have questions so we're all starting on the same page.

*[Optional Slide: **WORLDVIEW**]*

Worldview: A guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective, or some combination of these. The foundational outlook you have on life that helps you make sense of the world around you.¹

¹ Rockenbach, A. and M. Mayhew. IDEALS definition of Worldview

[Optional Slide: WORLDVIEW ENGAGEMENT/INTERFAITH COOPERATION]

Religious Pluralism: A world where people of differing religions and worldviews can live and work together in peace while maintaining their distinctiveness. We focus on working toward religious pluralism specifically: the proactive engagement of worldview diversity to a positive end.

Interfaith Cooperation/Worldview Engagement: This is the tactic through which to work toward religious pluralism. Interfaith cooperation is built by cultivating respect for worldview identity, mutually inspiring relationships between people of different worldviews, and action around shared values.

The rest of the terms on the sheet are for your reference; for the sake of time we won't talk about them all today.

● VIDEO & DISCUSSION: SOCIAL CAPITAL (25 minutes)

Tell participants: This video describes the purpose and importance of engaging religious diversity.

[Play video, Lesson 2. Module 2.3: Exploring Social Capital] www.ifyc.org/interfaith-leadership/course-modules

Ask participants: What major takeaways can we pull from this video? How does what the video explains resonate with our current climate?

Steer the group toward these points:

- ▶ Americans no longer have the option to ignore worldview diversity.
- ▶ Diversity itself doesn't guarantee that people will get along or even interact with one another.
- ▶ Diversity without social cohesion can be dangerous.
- ▶ Interfaith Cooperation builds social cohesion if it is designed to encourage healthy interaction.

Transition to pointing out that engaging with worldview identity and diversity is complicated for various reasons.

Ask participants: Why do you think we have such a hard time engaging worldview diversity in general?

Potential themes that might emerge (you can mention these as well):

- ▶ People often assume engaging around worldview will lead to conflict.
- ▶ We're not sure what is permissible within the public educational system in particular.
- ▶ No tradition is monolithic; there is a wide diversity of experience, interpretation, and practice within every tradition.
- ▶ People are a combination of many intersecting identities; one's worldview affects and is affected by their race, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and many more aspects of identity.
- ▶ Some people have experienced legitimate harm because of certain interpretations of religious teachings; it's important that we provide support for reconciling their experiences while challenging generalizations about entire belief systems based on the actions of a few.
- ▶ Worldview is often challenged, explored, and in flux during a person's college years.

Summarize: This is messy, imperfect work, but it is necessary and often very enriching, not just for communities but for individuals as well. It's important to enter it with goodwill, a willingness to understand another, and compassion for yourself.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!

● VIDEO & DISCUSSION: THE CIVIC GOODS OF PLURALISM (25 minutes)

Tell participants: We've discussed the importance of Bonding and Bridging capital in building pluralism in society overall. Now we'll explore the Civic Goods of Pluralism. When you watch this video, consider how these 'goods' translate to our campus specifically.

[Play video, Lesson 8. Module 8.3: The Civic Goods of Pluralism] www.ifyc.org/interfaith-leadership/course-modules

● REFLECTION & VISIONING (15 minutes)

Tell participants: Let's think about how the civic goods would appear on our campus if pluralism were the norm. We'll consider each civic good separately. Describe to me what you would see around campus to indicate these things were present:

- ▶ More Understanding, Less Prejudice
- ▶ Strengthens Social Cohesion
- ▶ Creates Bridged Social Capital
- ▶ Continuity of Identity Communities
- ▶ Creates Binding Narratives for Diverse Societies

Write the things people mention on the board or on paper.

● ACTION STEPS (10 minutes)

Ask participants: We've established that engaging worldview differences is important to build religious pluralism, and that pluralism encourages the civic goods we just explored. What is our charge in working with students? What is one *specific action* you can take to continue to grow your ability to engage worldview difference in a healthy way?

Example answers:

- ▶ Read up on other worldviews to grow my literacy.
- ▶ Include my worldview in discussions around my multiple identities.
- ▶ Invite people to be vulnerable in sharing their beliefs, and modeling that vulnerability with them.
- ▶ Advocate for more awareness and accommodation for worldview minorities on my campus.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!

Personal Reflection Exercise: Identity Gears

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Print and complete the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) to use as an example.
- ▶ Print one copy of the Identity Gears worksheet (front and back) for each participant.

GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Make space for people to think individually about their own worldview in a way that separates the need for expertise from the willingness to enter into interfaith experiences
- ▶ Help participants articulate their worldview, explore how it developed and continues to develop, and identify their potential biases, so they are willing to model worldview engagement for their students

➔ INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Tell participants: We often think we have to be “experts” on religion or know everything there is to know about our traditions in order to engage worldview. This is one of the reasons why interfaith dialogue is often seen as something that only happens between religious leaders and religious scholars.

But the truth is, anyone can participate because everyone is an expert on their own experience. You are only required to speak for yourself, not for your tradition. You are not required to represent your entire tradition, only the ways that it manifests in your life.

That said, it is important to do some pre-work to explore your beliefs and your identities. These exercises will help you to do that.

Ask participants:

- ▶ Is reflecting or engaging your own worldview something you do on a regular basis? Why or why not?
- ▶ Why do you think it’s important to know how to talk about worldview?

This is a completely independent exercise and best for groups that are new to the conversation around worldview and/or don’t know one another well. Participants will need a writing utensil and a copy of the Identity Gears worksheet.

Tell participants: The activity is simple; the thinking involved is complex. What I will invite you to do is to consider the different parts of your personal identity and how they all interact to make you the person you are. This exercise is often called "Identity Wheels" but we're going to take it a step further and think about the parts of our identity as gears, since they all work together.¹ Worldview does not exist in a vacuum, and knowing how it influences (and is influenced by) your other identities will help you understand what you bring into the interfaith interactions you have with your colleagues and students.

IDENTITY GEARS ACTIVITY: PART ONE (20 minutes)

Distribute Identity Gears worksheet

Tell participants: In the gears on the sheet describe the different identities you carry. Assign gears sizes based upon how much they influence your self-efficacy. For example, if you think of yourself first as a woman, assign "woman" to a larger gear, and if you see your Christian identity as less of an identifier, assign it to one of the smaller gears. If you see all the intersecting parts of your identity equally, make note of that.

Note that the point of this exercise is not to assign ourselves labels, but to explore the different parts of who we are and how that plays into our understanding of our worldview (even if that worldview doesn't fit neatly into a box).

If you're someone who prefers to avoid labels, you can think about the gears in terms of your relationships, experiences, stories, your family history, heroes, values, etc. This exercise is completely yours, so if you want to write in "I'm NOT _____" in terms of your identity, that is completely okay.

Share a little bit from your own worksheet as an example.

IDENTITY GEARS ACTIVITY: PART TWO (20 minutes)

Instruct participants to flip the sheet to the other side of the worksheet.

Tell participants: Let's go back to the same exercise we did before, but this time you're going to bring your worldview identity into focus. If your worldview identity is in formation, or you're still considering how you identify, that's completely fine.

Write in questions you are considering, ways that you define your relationship with a higher power, or higher purpose. You can include elements of different worldviews that you do identify with and elements you don't. Again, this isn't to compartmentalize ourselves.

I encourage you to be compassionate with yourselves during this exercise; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

[Optional slide, IDENTITY GEARS PART 2: YOUR WORLDVIEW]

Prompts to help you fill out the gears:

- ▶ Someone doesn't truly know me unless they know _____ about what I believe.
- ▶ It is so important to me, but I'm scared to let other people know that I believe _____.
- ▶ I know I may carry a set of biases toward _____ worldview.
- ▶ One thing that angers or frustrates me about an aspect of my worldview is _____.
- ▶ People often have inaccurate perceptions about this aspect of my worldview: _____.
- ▶ I don't identify strongly with any worldview, but I do hold strong values such as _____.

¹ Adapted from "Voices of Discovery", Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University.

DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

Instruct participants to find a partner (trios are fine if there is an uneven number of participants) and reflect together about the exercise for 10 minutes. Here are some discussion questions:

- ▶ What's different in talking about worldview identity versus other identities?
- ▶ Did you learn or discover anything about yourself through this exercise?
- ▶ How could you use this activity with your students?

Reconvene and ask participants to share their reflections on the exercise.

Tell participants: I will end by offering the disclaimer that this is a beginning. Hopefully you will continue your personal reflection and fully integrate your worldview into your overall description of what makes up your identity.

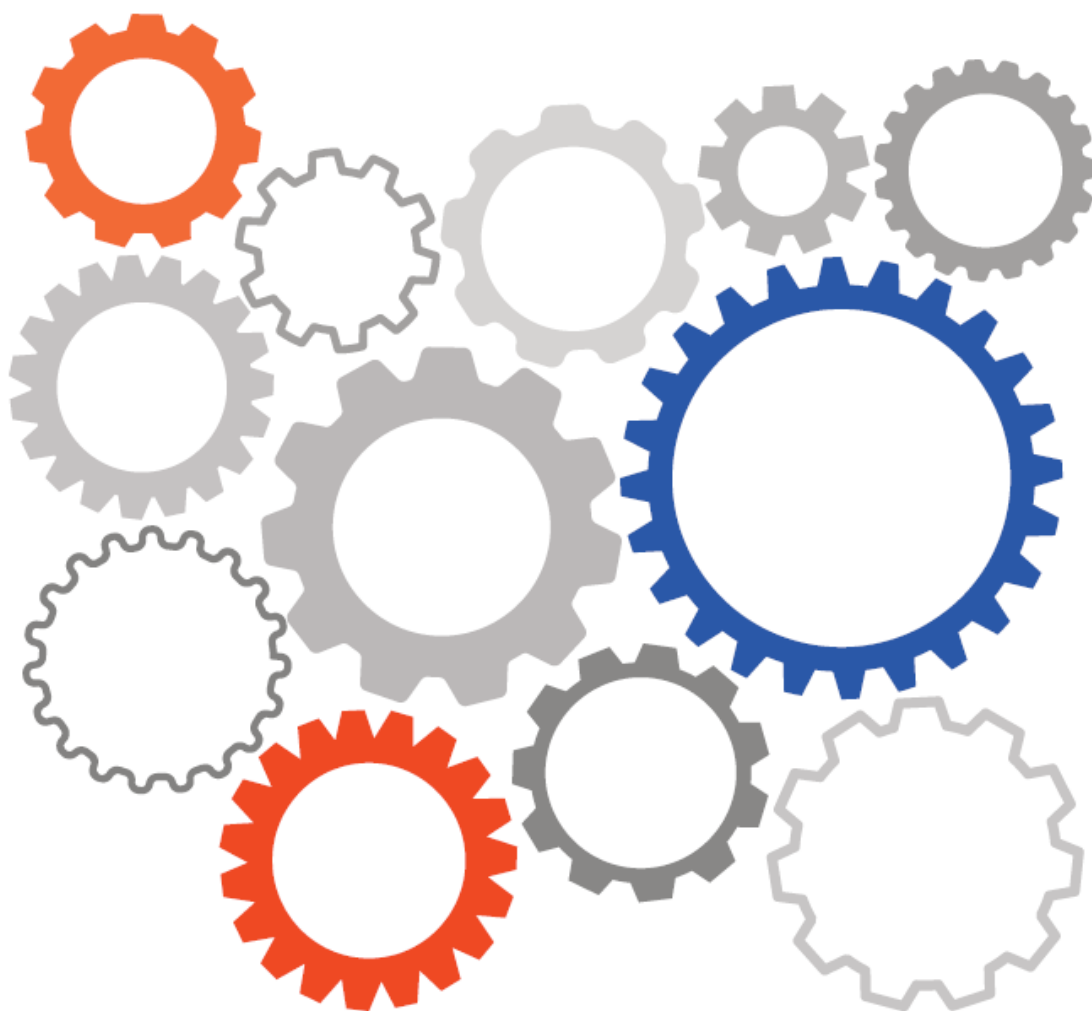
If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!

IDENTITY GEARS



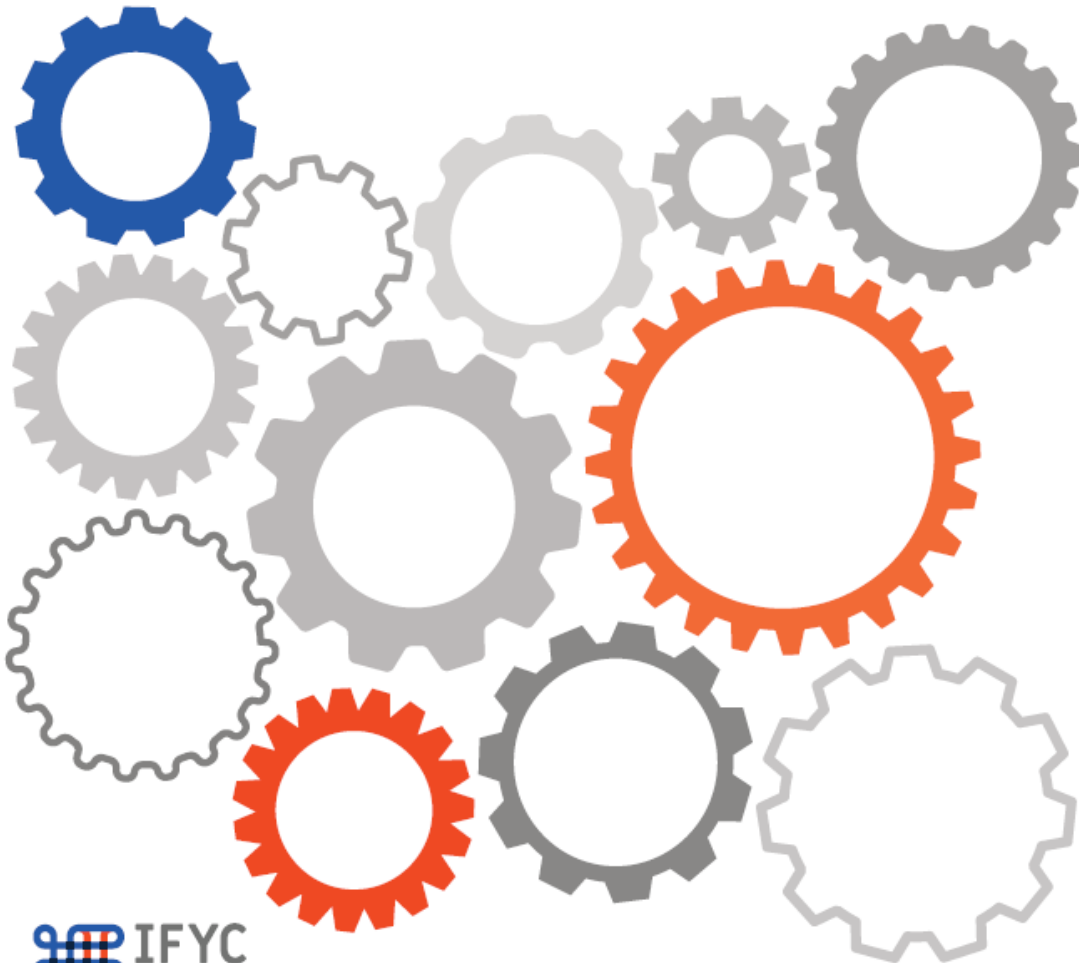
Think about the different aspects of your identity and how they influence your understanding of who you are. You may assign different identities to gears based on their size, and locate them in accordance with how they influence one another. At least one gear needs to be your worldview identity, however you understand it.



WORLDVIEW



Now focus in on your worldview identity. Think about the things you have learned about your worldview through religious education, academics, experiences, and relationships. Use the guiding questions in the presentation slide to map out your worldview identity/identities as you understand them.



Exploring Bias: Case Study

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Cue video case study about Ibtihaj Muhammad www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQGVH2TmIZg.

GOALS FOR THIS SECTION:

- ▶ Open a conversation about understanding personal bias, how it affects our work, and how we can begin to counteract personal bias
- ▶ Explore how different groups can encounter bias

➔ INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

There is quite a bit of information in this opening section. We suggest you read up a bit on bias so that you feel comfortable talking about it. We also invite you to use your own definitions and understanding of bias and draw upon other trainings you've led around similar topics.

Tell participants: It's important to clearly define the challenges that prevent people of different worldviews from engaging with one another. Often people carry biases toward those of different worldviews (and sometimes their own). We're going to spend some time discussing biases in general which will hopefully help us begin to interrogate our own biases.

We all have biases: they are the result of many things, including where and around whom we grow up, the messages we receive from our sources of information, and the encounters we have with people different from us throughout our lives. Research shows that most people pick up on the biases of others and internalize them when they are very young. Our biases are not our fault, but they are our responsibility.

Biases can be both positive and negative, but always favor an individual or group above another.

Tell participants: A bias, in the most rudimentary sense, is a cognitive shortcut—a way to create a definition based on small pieces of information.

In the dictionary bias is defined as

"the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, and allowing personal opinions to influence one's judgment."¹

¹ Oxford University Online Dictionary.

Ask participants:

- ▶ What are some ways that bias can manifest in our day to day interactions and decision-making?
- ▶ In other words, are there people or groups that we select toward or away from in terms of our friendship, our support, etc.?
- ▶ What kinds of things inform the biases we carry?

EXERCISE: CASE STUDY (30 minutes)

Story of Ibtihaj Muhammad, the first American Olympian to wear the Muslim Hijab in competition www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQGVH2TmlZg

Tell participants: Storytelling is a powerful way to build understanding. It also reveals the biases that people of different worldview encounter every day. This video is a story of the Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, who competed for the United States and won a bronze medal at the 2016 Games.

Take note of the challenges she has faced as a Muslim woman who covers and how the biases of others brought about those challenges.

Watch the video (12 minutes)

Debrief (15 minutes)

Ask participants:

- ▶ What stories did Ibtihaj share about her experiences as an athlete and as a Muslim?
- ▶ What kinds of biases do you think informed the ways people interacted with Ibtihaj?
- ▶ From where do you think these biases arise for people who hold them?
- ▶ Can you see any parallels between Ibtihaj's experiences and your own?
- ▶ How can we work to avoid marginalizing people because of their religious observances?

DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

Tell participants: As I said before, biases come from many places and they are our responsibility to be aware of and counteract whenever possible. Being aware of the existence of bias is one step, but the next step is understanding your own personal biases against particular worldviews. Take five minutes now and write down some personal reflections on what personal biases you think you might hold and what experiences you may have had that helped shape those biases. (Pause for five minutes to allow for silent reflection).

Ask participants the following reflection questions, pausing for conversation between each:

- ▶ How can we work to counter the biases we carry?
- ▶ How can our awareness of our biases toward certain worldview groups benefit your student relationships?
- ▶ Do you have an experience of recognizing and disrupting one of your other existing biases? What have you learned from that experience?
- ▶ Do you think the field of higher education or your college campus holds any particular biases toward/ against worldview identity groups? Do you think there are worldview groups who feel welcome or less welcome in your campus community?

Potential Answers:

- ▶ Recognize them and interrupt our internal narratives.
- ▶ Challenge generalizations about entire groups.
- ▶ Build relationships with individuals.

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!

