



## **MNIPL Community Climate Conversation Facilitator Manual**

- I. **Welcome and introductions-** MNIPL- Overview of what we do, our approach and a definition of climate justice)

### **Here is a sample script:**

- A. **MNIPL** is a non-profit organization working to build an interfaith climate justice movement in Minnesota. We believe that faith communities have an essential role to play in responding to the climate crisis and are uniquely positioned to aid in climate justice work because of how people of faith share values taught by all major religions that call us to care for one another and for the earth. This sense of conviction and a belief in the power of something greater to guide and sustain us is powerful and inspiring. At MNIPL we focus on capacity building-empowering people to organize in their faith communities and beyond based on the resources, gifts and history of their place. As they build this container we offer powerful action opportunities to work towards practical, systematic and spiritual and relationship based solutions.
- B. **What is a Climate conversation and why is it worth our time?** For the last 3 years MNIPL has been doing Community Climate Conversations with thousands of people around the state of Minnesota. This approach was developed based on the work of Anthony Leiserowitz at the Yale project on Climate Communication in his study the 6 Americas looking at attitudes about climate change. They found that while 70% of people in the US believe that climate change is happening, less than 1 in 3 ever talk about it with others. That gap between knowledge about climate change and conversation about it represents a huge opportunity. Climate change is also something that has become polarizing and politicized. Many people feel intimidated about talking about it because they have felt confused by the science. This is why we worked to create a heart-based, values based conversation model that opens up dialogue, exploration and can deepen a community's connection. Today we are going to participate in a community climate conversation together.

## **II. Community Climate conversation**

### **Heart-Led approaches to Climate Conversations**

## **A. Stories of Connection**

The facilitator shares two stories of connection from their own life. As an example, Erin shares one of simple joy with her brother on a beloved river from her childhood. And one about her mom's experience of profound connection and unconditional love as Erin's grandmother died. Everyone is asked to reflect on stories of connection from their own lives and then to break into pairs to share their stories.

After everyone shares, we return to the large group and share:

1. What they felt connected to;
2. The feelings that they had in their stories that let them know they were connected; and
3. The actions that were taken that allowed for or facilitated these experiences of connection.

**Facilitator notes: Let people know you have had time to craft your story and offer it to them as a gift to listen and feel. They aren't expected to have polished stories. Moments of connection happen in ordinary mundane moments in life and in momentous passage moments. At times they are full of joy, at other times full of grief. Stories of connection are moments in life that are at the core of the experience and meaning of what it means to be human. First, give them a minute in silence to reflect on a story, and then to turn to a partner, preferably someone they don't know well. Tell them how long they have to share their stories and that you will make an announcement when they are halfway through their time to make sure they shift to the other person so both have time to share.**

**Transition from this section by suggesting that we hold these stories and experiences in our awareness as we move into talking directly about climate change- as reminders about why we are doing this work and as a strategy for how connections can sustain and nurture us in the sometimes difficult work of addressing climate change.**

## **B. What Do We Know About Climate Change?**

The group is asked to throw out popcorn style what it is they know about climate change and how it impacts what we care most about. Here are some links to resources/citations for some of important climate science that is useful when talking to others.

[Climate Change in Minnesota: 23 Signs](#)

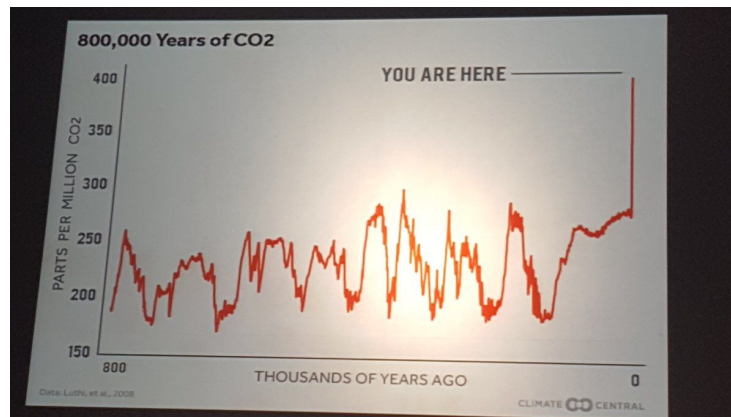
[Nasa: Climate Change](#)

[Recalculating the Climate Math](#)

[Take Part Article, IPCC report supports McKibben's Article](#)

**Key elements to make sure you touch on:**

- **What are the impacts/evidence**
  - Sea level rise
  - Storms and Drought
  - Extinction
  - Human Migration- Climate Refugees
  - Threat multiplier- drives civil unrest and armed conflicts
  - Impacts affect those who are least responsible the most
- **What is Climate Change / evidence (600,000 years of history temp and CO2)**
  - Average global temp rising
  - CO2 in the atmosphere increasing because of burning of fossil fuels
  - CO2 is a greenhouse gas- like a blanket on the earth- traps heat from the sun.
  - Feedback loops- less arctic ice is less reflection and more absorption of heat which increases the heat
- **Terrifying new math- 80% in the ground**



**Facilitator notes:**

**We invite the knowledge to come from the group; this is more empowering psychologically. People resist less and take more ownership when it comes from them. In the face of something overwhelming, supporting people’s sense of authority, knowledge and agency can be activating. Normalizing knowledge about climate change also makes it easier and more acceptable to talk about. As you write what people say on the board you can chose to dive in deeper to what someone brings up so you are sure to touch on the key points. You can just write down other points to address later or to not address at all. If someone brings up the observation that there is a natural cycle of carbon and temperature that can be a good moment to pivot to the graph of the ice core samples that show both the connection between the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and the temperature and how for 800,000 years while it has fluctuated the amount of carbon never went above 300ppm. Currently we are at 402ppm. This segways into**

talking about our carbon budget (how much more carbon we can burn and have a chance of keeping the average global temperature rise below 1.5-2C and how fossil fuel companies currently have 5x the amount we can afford to burn in their reserves. This means our task as a movement is to be powerful and effective enough to keep 80% of fossil fuels in the ground.

### **C. How does it make you feel?**

The facilitator asks the group to popcorn out feelings that have in response to this discussion or as we consider the climate crisis in their day-to-day lives.

*Facilitator notes: Many people posit that feelings of grief and despair in response to what we know is happening around us is a primary reason people do not engage in this issue (i.e. Mary Pipher, Joanna Macy). Creating spaces in which we name the feelings we usually carry alone and feel them together normalizes the experience and counters the feeling of isolation. It can allow someone's emotional process to move forward. [For more on the emotional and psychological response to climate change](#). Make sure to keep people focused on the expression of feelings not thoughts. If someone says a thought like "It's terrible how we aren't doing enough to stop climate change" you can say: "When you are thinking that it's terrible what feelings do you have?". Some groups struggle to name and feel emotions and it's important as a facilitator that you direct them back to that.*

### **D. How does your faith both inform and sustain your response? What religious teachings guide or sustain us?**

Ask the group to break into small groups of 3 and go around in a circle sharing:

- Specific teachings that support caring for earth and for all people
- Specific teachings that give hope, inspiration, support for the response-for dealing with unknown

*Facilitator notes: Grounding our response and looking for support in our theology as people of faith orients us to the archetypal nature of the human struggle and that there are resources to support us as we respond with compassion, courage and love. Mary Pipher says that when we explore information about climate change and the current crises we face, we must then couple that sharing with opportunities for action. Otherwise, it can cause trauma and paralysis. By exploring how faith calls us, and how we have something unique and needed to contribute, we are on the move towards action.*

## **III. Into Action: Three-legged stool of Climate Organizing**

When working to strategize an effective response to climate change it is useful to consider the conceptual framework of the Three-legged Stool:

1. Practical
2. Movement Building/Systemic
3. Spiritual and Relational

This is useful when considering how to balance the types of actions that are taken as well as how to make any action we take more comprehensive and engaging. An example of this is a UMC church that is working to improve a rain garden (practical). Instead of simply having a few committee members do the work, they are going to share in their newsletter and in worship will talk about how they are caring for bees in their community through the planting of bee-friendly plants (movement building/systemic), they are going to invite children, youth and families to help with the planting (relational/spiritual), and at the the annual UMC conference they are going to share their story (movement building/systemic).

This way one action has the impact of building the community's identity as being a community engaged in caring for creation, inviting people who would not otherwise have been involved, and adding to the larger story in the denomination.

**Facilitator Notes: For the length of time you normally have for a climate conversation presenting the Three-legged stool and some of the action opportunities is a great start in helping people feel excited about possibilities for action. They are then invited to have follow up meetings to dive deeper into their congregational assets (what are the gifts, skills, interests and story of the individuals in their community and the community as a whole?) and to learn more about action opportunities and to make a strategic plan of next steps that will move their community forward in expanding and deepening community engagement.**