SPANISH MESSAGES

View 5 of 8 reflections from our first Spanish gathering, more to follow. Photo gallery.

AUCKLAND, NZ 2014

Now open for registration with schedule and discounted rates. Be sure to save your spot soon for Nov. 8-9, 2014.

NETHERLANDS 2014

Coming to Utrecht on October 24-26, registration is open and a preliminary schedule is posted.
Seattle Update

January 7 is only two weeks away. So be sure to register quickly and book your room. If you can't get our low rate at the Westin Seattle please email us.

**PREPARATION** - First of all, we always encourage you to spend some quality time in prayer as well as in the Gospels and the Desire of Ages prior to attending any One project gathering. It helps to till the soil of your heart as you prepare to engage in the Jesus conversation. Secondly, be sure to finalize your lodging and transportation and if you're flying into SEA-TAC, you can look at Seattle's Central Link Light Rail that will take you from the airport to just two blocks away from the hotel.

**FACILITATORS** - If you've been to a One project gathering before, you know that one of the most meaningful and memorable experiences involves the conversations (what we call "recalibrate") that take place around the table following a message (what we call a "reflection"). Each table needs a facilitator to help encourage conversation. Each facilitator role is important, and if you'd like to be a facilitator, watch this video and contact Terry Swenson to learn more or to get a preview of the facilitators guidebook.

**HELP THE HOMELESS** - This year in Seattle we're encouraging everyone to pack some extra gloves, socks, sweatshirts, sweaters, and/or jackets in your suitcase to bring as a donation for those in need in downtown Seattle. The organization we're working with, thanks to Fabio Maia at Pacific Union College, is DESC (Downtown Emergency Services Center), who serves over 7,000 vulnerable people in Seattle. Our donations will go to the local shelters for those in need of warmer clothing. As you come to the Seattle gathering on Monday morning, February 10, a team from PUC, will be at the doors with bags to collect your items and deliver them to DESC later in the day. Thank you, in advance, for your help.
A Gathering Coming Near You

We are excited to announce and promote the gathering schedule for 2014, with items for 2015 coming soon. We truly hope you'll be able to join us at one of the opportunities below and register soon to ensure better rates and lodging availability. Also be sure to check the schedules for each gathering to see a list of happenings and speakers as they are posted and revised regularly. Here's the list for 2014 so far:

Seattle, WA, USA...February 10-11, 2014

Sydney, Australia...July 19-20, 2014

Perth, Australia...July 26-27, 2014

São Paulo, Brasil...October 13-14, 2014

Utrecht, Netherlands...October 24-26, 2014

La Sierra University, USA...November 7-9, 2014

Auckland, New Zealand...November 8-9, 2014

We are exploring a few smaller gatherings within the USA, France and Japan. We are also focusing on gatherings for Pastors only at the request of local conferences. Please keep the ministry in your prayers as we seek to follow the guidance of the Spirit into new opportunities to share Jesus.
One Love - A Marriage Celebration

We would like to congratulate Peter Aitken (Sydney, Australia) and Rachel Lemons (Chicago, USA) on their wedding which was celebrated December 20 in Sydney, Australia. Peter planned ahead and traveled 15,000km to attend our Chicago gathering in February with a small group of Aussie friends. Rachel was in her hometown and inspired to attend at the last minute on her own, but God had big plans in mind! Both quickly fell in love after a 'chance' meeting at the gathering.

You can read about their incredible story here.

God brought them together from opposite sides of the world, and God plays a huge role in their lives today.

Rachel writes; "While we love each other deeply, we are convinced that the only constant in our lives in our relationship with God. He is the same yesterday, today and forever ... We pray that you too will find constant hope and consistency in God. We pray that God will always be the source of your strength. We are grateful that God has brought us together and that we can use our relationship to bring other people closer to Him."

To Peter and Rachel we wish you God's blessing for your future together! And to the rest of you considering attending a gathering, you just might be surprised at what all could happen (insert very big smiley face here).
Unwrapping a Mystery that never was

It seems around every corner there is some new TV series, book, or movie based on the theme of mystery and intrigue. Winston Churchill once described Russia as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. The apostle Paul used the word "mystery" to describe the gospel and the idea of Christ in us. The ministry of the One project, however, is not a mystery. We encourage Christ-centered conversations as we seek to celebrate the supremacy of Jesus Christ within the Seventh-day Adventist church. We strive to "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness," to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfeactor of our faith," and to "Let self be lost in [Jesus]." (Matthew 6: 33, Hebrews 12: 2, SC 71:2) If you'd like to learn more, please read our FAQ's. Of course, we'd love if you could join the conversation at a gathering near you, or connect with a board member online or at one of these speaking opportunities.

January 9-11...Andrews University, Sam Leonor

January 10...La Sierra University First Service, Dilys Brooks

January 11...Walla Walla University, Alex Bryan

January 11-18...New Zealand Big Camp, Terry Swenson

January 16...Hope Channel, Sam Leonor

January 27-28...WWU Portland Nursing Campus, Paddy McCoy
2013 - TOP's Year in Review

Consider this our Christmas Card to you, with a short message about all the things TOP and some of it's board has been up to in the past year.

First of all, we completed FOUR gatherings starting in Chicago, IL, USA, then in Newcastle in the great country of Australia, then onto the campus of Newbold College in England, and finally a Spanish version at Andrews University. The gathering at Andrews was the 11th gathering since the One project met in room 602, July 2010 (click here to listen to the messages or see pictures). Next year we'll host another SEVEN gatherings with potential for a few more. That includes several thousand people who are joining, being impacted by, and taking that impact and the gospel message to the world that God has called them to serve.

Other major activity for 2013 included the release of Alex Bryan's book, The Green Cord Dream, in German, and Terry Swenson's facilitator guidebook for our gatherings can be downloaded here. Also, the One project headquarters announced it would move to Boulder, CO, with the move of Japhet De Oliveira from his role as senior university chaplain at Andrews University to senior pastor at the Boulder Seventh-day Adventist Church. Special thanks are due to Andrews University for being a founding partner, who will still process all our donations and registrations until we move our accounts fully to Boulder.
As we count the blessings of 2013, we look forward to what God has in store with this ministry and us in 2014 and the years ahead until He sends His Son in the clouds to take us home. Until that glorious day, we hope you'll join the conversation (Facebook and Twitter) as we fix our eyes on the One and only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

---

The Importance of the Incarnation

A college student walks into my office -- lonely, and all alone.
"Pastor, my heart is hurting."
"What's the matter?" I say.
"I want to fall in love. I want romance. I want to be dating. I want to get married."
"But aren't you a Sociology major?" I ask.
"Yes, what does that have to do with anything?"
"Well, haven't you read books, taken classes, listened to plenty of lectures about human relationships, family life, even marriage?"
"Yes?"
"So you know something about love?"
"I guess."
"Well, let me give you some more to read." (I reach over to my substantial office library and pull eight or nine books off the shelves.) "Here," I say, "are several more books specifically on love, romance, dating, marriage. If you read these books your knowledge will grow about what matrimony is all about. Maybe this will satisfy that pang of pain in your soul."
"You want me to read more books?" she asks.
"Yes. Isn't that what you want?"
"Well, pastor, no. I want a real relationship, not more information about what makes a marriage—even a good one."
"So you don't want to know about love ... you want to experience love?"
"Yes! Yes! Now you've got it."

The story of Christmas is simply this: Immanuel. God wants to be with us. A library of doctrine is important. Shelves of theology do matter. A raft of "truth" and "truths" have their value. But all of this is no satisfactory substitute for Truth, who is, Jesus Christ. The Incarnation's significance is not merely so that Jesus can show us who God is, and what He is like. Jesus invites us to know God in real relationship, to experience His love, his tenderness, his joy, his grace. The important of Jesus -- the One we celebrate this season - -is a definitive statement. The Creator of the Universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is in love with you.
He is the Desire of the Ages, even and especially in The Year of our Lord 2014. He is Present Truth, Eternal Orthodoxy, even and especially now. Jesus is the affection of God, yesterday, today, and forever.

P.S. A book recommendation: the historian George Knight has written a new devotional book for 2014: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus: an invitation to spend a year with your Best Friend. If you don't have a plan yet to wake up thinking about Jesus in the New Year, perhaps this book, with 365 daily entries, might be a blessing.

-Alex Bryan
Last Chance to Donate for 2013

We are always gracious of any support that you or your organization may feel called to give as we come to the close of another great year of ministry. Of course, all donations are tax deductible to those of you here in the U.S., but all are encouraged to prayerfully consider supporting the ministry of the One project as we continue to take the crucial Jesus-centered conversations around the globe and hopefully to an area near you. Contact Japhet De Oliveira if there some specific aspect of the One project you would like to support.
About five months ago, a perfect set of events came together in my life. Simply put, I experienced God’s generosity. He gave, and He just keeps on giving. He gave so much there was an overflow.

I was in a state of suspense at the time – just returning from a 2 1/2 year stint in the Middle East, where I worked for a University running their Office of Communications. I knew returning home was the next step in my life, but I didn’t know what I was coming home to.

About a week after my return, I felt this nudging inside to go to some conferences. I wasn’t sure why, but the urge was strong, so I followed it, and I found two conferences. One was about Youth Evangelism. The other was called the One Project. The only problem is the One Project was sold out. Even still, I felt I needed to be there…

The day the conference started, I went over to the hotel where it was being held and searched out the event coordinator. Though I was close to talking myself out of it many times, I finally mustered up the courage and explained the situation to him. He kindly allowed me to register for the event.

I wanted to be at the One Project because I know there, they would be talking about Jesus, and I was hungry to be around people like that and to hear conversations like that.

Prior to attending both conferences, I whispered a small prayer: “God, help me to be open to meeting the people you want me to meet.” I wasn’t sure who this might be. I just knew I was transitioning back to my country after almost three years of being away. I thought this might be an opportunity to promote my book or to find employment. I had no idea what God was planning in my life…

Continue Reading Part 2 of the story…
Welcome
“I’m praying not only for them but also for those who will believe in Me because of them and their witness about Me. The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind—Just as You, Father, are in Me and I in you, so they might be of one heart and mind with Us. Then the world might believe that You, in fact, sent Me.”

—John 17:20-23 The Message (MSG)

Thank you for your willingness to follow Jesus through serving in such an important capacity at this One project gathering. As a facilitator, you will help to bring about lively discussion and build a Jesus-centered community. This manual, along with the training sessions, will help you to be confident and effective in this role.
Table of Contents
## Vision for Recalibrate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Creating a Circle of Belonging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding the Interplace</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living the Circle of Belonging</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Making It Happen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s Role</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation Process</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Quick Tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Further Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vision for Recalibrate
Each session begins with REFLECT, a short message exploring the theme of this gathering. Following this is RECALIBRATE, the discussion group you will engage with around your table. We hope that these discussion groups will provide a catalyst for Jesus-centered people to re-vision ministry, life, church, and relationships.

These tables should provide a safe place where participants feel protected, valued, and respected, so they can share ideas without fear of censure, and experience life with a spirit of gracious inclusion, innovative love, and defiant optimism—helping to create a strong, unified body of Jesus.
Creating a Circle of Belonging
Finding the Interplace

The One project gathering brings together people from many diverse places and backgrounds. They have a variety of religious perspectives and are experiencing different phases of their spiritual journeys with Jesus. This is not a spectator event. We encourage participants to move from the sidelines toward experiencing deep community in Jesus.

We pray that each person will develop new Christ-centered dreams—both personal and corporate. We also want people to form new and lasting connections with others as they live out those dreams.

Some of the people will be working through tough theological questions. Others come burdened with past hurts in their relationship with the Church. There will be people who are feeling a powerful experience with Christ, who have been followers for years—as well as those just getting acquainted with Him, who may well wonder if He exists at all. Participants will have a wide range of beliefs about how to live as disciples of Christ.

Our dream is that each person who attends will find all that Jesus longs for them to experience. We pray that each person will develop new Christ-centered dreams—both personal and corporate. We also want people to form new and lasting connections with others as they live out those dreams.

How do we hope to achieve this? By focusing on the One whom we all love and serve—Jesus. By having presenters in Reflect who will share honestly, openly, transparently—with nothing hidden. But transformation really takes place during Recalibrate at the tables where the participants are seated and are able to enter into meaningful dialogue with each other. To use a metaphor, the facilitators are the conductors while the table participants are an orchestra of musicians. Facilitators bring out the harmony of each person’s song and make it possible for the group to make beautiful music together. Facilitators are the creators and maintainers of a space allowing each person to experience a “circle of belonging” where Jesus dreams and Kingdom relationships can be realized. In order to create a circle of belonging, it is necessary to find the “Interplace.”

The Interplace? What in the world is that? It is just a phrase used to symbolize what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 22: 37-40:

37 Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

God is love. The universe He created is based on love. He created us to be in His image, to live in love. In the passage above, Jesus defines the process of how God-like love is realized. It gives us a blueprint of how we can find the Interplace during Recalibrate.

The early Celtic Christian community created a unique representation of the cross of Christ. Within its symbolism, we discover how to create the relationships that Jesus wants.

*Excerpted from InterPlace: The Circle of Belonging by Terry Swenson.*
The vertical aspect of the cross represents the love and community we experience with God. The horizontal aspect represents the love relationships we have with others. Both the horizontal and vertical should converge in our lives, creating an interplace. The following text demonstrates the incongruity that occurs when only one aspect of our relationships exists:

20 If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? 21 And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too” (1 John 4:20-21).

This point of convergence creates a circle in the Celtic cross. This “circle of belonging” is a place of love, forgiveness, acceptance, and involvement. It is a place where the Gospel becomes reality. Just like the interwoven motif of the Celtic cross, it is an “interplace.”

An InterPlace is formed where the “vertical” beam of the cross intersects the “horizontal” beam. Interplace can only come into being when our “vertical” love relationship with God is living and vibrant and growing within the boundaries defined in His Word. When we realize how deeply and completely God loves us and how He forgives us, accepts us, and is trustworthy with us, we can know how to love ourselves and love others in our “horizontal” love relationships.

During Recalibrate the facilitators will help create an InterPlace where all participants feel important and valued.

Living the Circle of Belonging

What is a circle of belonging? It is a space that is created between individuals.

What are the elements needed to establish the circle of belonging during Recalibrate? Facilitators will need openness, acceptance, inclusiveness and authenticity—all motivated by love—the love of Christ both experienced by us and lived out through us. When we possess these qualities, a natural space is created in our hearts and lives for others because God has created that space for us in Jesus.

There is a haunting scene in the Disney animated film Dumbo. Much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the circus elephant community, Dumbo is born with extremely oversized ears. He experiences increasing ostracism until, finally, after his mother’s incarceration, the other elephants take action to exclude him once and for all. When little Dumbo enters the circus wagon, all the elephants form a circle, heads inward and rumps out, closing ranks and effectively blocking Dumbo from inclusion. He is banned from elephant society.

They are spaces where every person is a greatly loved child of God. They are spaces where every person is equal. They are spaces where Jesus is free to work, where people can be loved and valued, where people are not excluded, but included.
Musk oxen create a defensive formation when threatened. The young, aged, ill and weak are protected in the center of the circle. No predator can breach this circle.

That scene reflects the feelings and experience of many in society and in church communities today. It is reflective of many people attending One project gatherings. They feel excluded. They feel isolated. They feel lonely. The questions of their hearts are: “Who am I? Where do I belong? Where will I find real authentic love?” Just like little Dumbo, they want to know that they are accepted, valued and loved. They live in a world filled with exclusive “elephant communities.” The God that formed all of us feels their pain and did something about it. He created the “circle of belonging.”

Nature provides us with another example of circling behavior in the animal world. Yet this example provides the antithesis of the circle of elephants in Dumbo’s world. It is the circle of inclusivity exhibited by musk oxen.

Musk oxen create a defensive formation when threatened. They will first run to a higher location, then turn and stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle. With their heads lowered, they form an impenetrable wall. The young, aged, ill and weak are protected in the center of the circle. No predator—not even a polar bear—can breach this circle. As followers of Jesus, we are called to form such a circle of belonging.

The purpose of Recalibrate within the table communities is to create the opportunity for each person involved to experience this kind of relationship. Table communities are not places to promote a program or push propaganda. They are not spaces to dominate or control. They are not spaces in which theological dividing lines should be drawn. Rather, they are spaces where every person is a greatly loved child of God. They are spaces where every person is equal. They are spaces where Jesus is free to work, where people can be loved and valued, where people are not excluded but included.

Facilitators, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, have a unique opportunity to guide the process of Interplace that makes a circle of belonging become a reality during Recalibrate.
Making it Happen
Facilitator's Role

The facilitator:
- Establishes a safe place for each participant.
- Models openness, acceptance, and inclusiveness.
- Nurtures relationships among participants.
- Transitions participants into Recalibrate sessions.
- Keeps the conversation on topic, avoiding tangents.
- Prevents individuals from dominating the discussions.
- Helps everyone get a chance to participate.
- Encourages participants to email, tweet or text questions based on the Reflect presentation.
- Urges participants to stay in touch after the gathering.

THE FACILITATOR IS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST

Environmentalists practice restraint when it comes to controlling results. They are primarily concerned with creating a “healthy” climate for spontaneity to occur. They develop simple environmental parameters and then sit back to see what happens. “Programmers,” on the other hand, take control. Programmers tend to program the life out of a space. Safe healthy spaces will result in spontaneous community networking and connecting.

THE FACILITATOR IS A CONNECTOR

Some people are natural born connectors. Most of the time, you don’t notice them because they do their work under the radar. Their passion is getting to know new people. They love to “connect the dots” by matching people with certain gifts, passions, and talents with others who need or can empower those qualities. The work of a connector is to meet, match and provide opportunities for individuals to naturally connect.

THE FACILITATOR IS AN ENABLER

Community can’t be micromanaged or artificially constructed. It is organic. Community “happens.” The facilitator’s role is similar to that of a midwife. She isn't the one giving birth. She is, however, the one responsible for helping the mother to produce a healthy child.

Facilitation Process

The purpose of the Reflect segments is for the presenters to share different aspects of Jesus, His life, His mission and ministry, and what He is calling His followers to do. It asks individuals to think deeply about how to live and love, how to be “Jesus-in-the-flesh” to those around them each day. During Reflect, presenters set the stage for these kinds of conversations, inviting participants to think and respond during Recalibrate. It is up to the facilitators to help make the most of these opportunities for meaningful conversation at the tables. The following are important ways you can make sure your table discussions are effective:

PREPARATION: Before you begin your discussions, pray for the wisdom, insight, guidance and love of the Spirit as you interact with your table.

TRANSITIONS FROM REFLECT TO RECALIBRATE:

Facilitators lead transitions. At the points where the word “facilitator” appears on the run sheet you will take the lead. The speakers won’t be introducing you. They will finish their message and then you’re on! It is going to be up to you to transition into your discussions. Aim to be clear in setting up the expectations at the table and in establishing your leadership so that everyone knows what is going on.
**Before you begin, we encourage you to pray for the wisdom, insight, guidance and love of the Spirit as you interact with those at your table.**

**SHARING THE PURPOSE/VISION FOR RECALIBRATE:** Please plan to share the purpose and vision (in your own words) of these discussion groups at the beginning of the first Recalibrate session so that everyone at your table is on the same page. You could begin with saying something like:

“So some of you may be thinking, 'I’m still not entirely sure what we’re supposed to be doing here. As I see it,' . . .”

**KEEP CONVERSATIONS ON TRACK:** The table discussions take up the majority of the time at the gathering. This is because we are hoping to move participants from merely listening about Jesus in church and life to investing in tangible ways in the questions, conversations, and challenges about Jesus in church and life.

**ENCOURAGE CONNECTIONS:**

Christ-centered people connecting and networking together to dream and plan can do wonders in the world—bringing more of Jesus into their families and communities. Each group of participants at each table will bring a unique mixture of gifts and personal experiences with Christ that will enable them to do extraordinary things together—if they remain connected and work together in community as part of the body of Christ.

**TRANSITIONING BACK TO REFLECT:** Be aware of the time and help to transition your table from Recalibrate back to the next Reflect session—without cutting the conversation off or making individuals feel shut down.

Before you begin, we encourage you to pray for the wisdom, insight, guidance and love of the Spirit as you interact with those at your table.

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FAQS

What if someone tries to dominate?
Some people enjoy talking more than others. If someone at your table dominates the conversation, try to redirect. Thank the person for sharing and ask someone else at the table for their insights. If the dominating person tries to take control again, repeat the process. If that fails, take the person aside during a break and explain that Recalibrate is a time to build community and involve all of the participants at the table. If this fails, contact a member of the facilitators’ leadership team for help.

What if no one talks?
This will rarely, if ever, happen. If there is a long lull in the conversation, you could ask individuals to share what the presentation made them feel and why. Feelings are subjective; there isn’t a “right or wrong” answer and this can help people feel more comfortable in sharing. You, as facilitator, could also get things rolling by modeling with your perceptions.

How do I make sure everybody is involved?
Remember that people have different levels of comfort with engaging with strangers. Some people engage with others very easily and instantly while others are more comfortable observing and waiting to speak. Don’t force anyone to share, but do invite them. Give opportunities for quieter participants to get involved. Watch for the cues—both verbal and non-verbal—that indicate they might be open to speaking.

What if our conversation gets off track?
Wait for an appropriate opportunity and ask a redirecting question or share a thought or insight that brings the conversation back into focus. However, if it seems the Spirit is leading your group in an area of conversation, allow this to happen. Use your discretion as a facilitator—but in most cases, try to stay on the given topic as much as possible.

What if I can’t answer a question?
This fear haunts most facilitators! Do not fear! There is an easy solution. If someone asks you a question that you cannot answer, admit this and ask the rest of the participants for their insights. You are not supposed to be the ultimate answer person. You are there to enable conversation and community.

What if my group doesn’t “gel”?
Some groups become close communities more easily than others due to the make-up of the individuals at the table. If yours takes longer to become close, focus on helping members get to know each other better through allowing them to share things like how they came to know Jesus, Bible promises that have helped them through the difficulties in life, questions they’d like to ask Jesus, and so on. This helps participants engage in each other’s humanity and connect in meaningful ways. You can always talk to the facilitators’ leadership team for ideas and help.

What if I lose participants?
To begin with, don’t take it personally or feel like you have failed! Some people might want to visit other tables to increase networking opportunities. The gathering always allows for participants to change tables if they so desire. It is never a good idea to try and make people stay where they don’t want to be. You’ll likely gain participants too!
Quick Tips

- Start discussions with prayer.
- Begin with introductions.
- Listen to each table member and provide validation, whether you agree or disagree.
- Do not allow anyone to dominate the discussion—yourself included!
- Re-direct conversation back to the topic at hand if necessary.
- Create a safe environment for people to share thoughts and questions without judgment.
- Help the conversations to flow within the allotted time.
- Make sure everyone gets the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- Focus on constructive topics.
- Urge participants to send questions to the speakers for Response.
- Encourage participants to keep in touch after the gathering.

Further Resources


