

CHANGING LIVES conversations

Why Changing Lives Conversations (CLC)?

If we want to share something of our experience of how Jesus has changed us, we need to be able to honestly speak of our experience of God and faith. But many of us, both ordained and lay, do not always feel confident about 'God-talk' outside church on Sunday: we feel we don't know enough, that our experience isn't 'holy' enough, or that we wouldn't be taken seriously.

Communicating God's life-changing love within our everyday lives is the key challenge in bearing witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. If we are to engage more fully with God's world, we need to express what God means to us in the contexts we live and work in every day.

Changing Lives Conversations can be a key part of that process – helping us to find simple, small steps towards living as Christians every day of the week and not just on Sundays. The gathered life and worship of a church is a vital expression of faith, but we want to find ways of using this time together to better nurture our life of faith across the week.

Setting up and facilitating the conversations

1 Choosing a group

This could be a PCC, committee or team; a larger group meeting or service; or even an online group or service.

- Is this a group that would benefit from engaging with questions around discipleship?
- Will members be able to reflect on their responses to the questions?
- What is the potential impact if this group uses the questions over a period of time?

2 Creating a trustful environment

Sharing needs to be a space where people feel safe and trust others. Facilitators will need to create an environment that:

- Explains the process simply and clearly
- Reassures people to share only what they wish and that this will be respected
- Clarifies how confidentiality will be honoured
- Gives people the option to opt out or pass
- Attends to any pastoral or safeguarding needs that may arise in the group

3 Introducing the questions

Ask these two questions, one at a time, sometime when this group meets. Allow 10-15 minutes for both. They can be used as a warm-up or as a lead-in to prayer.

The facilitator can use the two standard questions or can shape the questions according to the group's capacity and readiness. Make sure you give a few moments for pairs to silently reflect before they share. Make it clear they are not expected to share the content of what is said to the wider group.

The first question: How is Jesus/God changing your life now?

- In pairs, share a recent experience or perspective on this.
- Give participants 4-5 minutes to discuss.
- If you sense your group needs a more general question to start off, see the Additional Information sheet.

The second question: How can we best encourage one another to be everyday disciples?

- The same pair takes 4-5 minutes to identify what encouragement looks like.

4 Following up (as time allows)

- Invite a time of prayer (and/or)
- Ask the group if there are any observations they would like to make about engaging with each question – process, not content.

After the session

These review questions could be used directly following the conversations and/or at the end of the gathering.

- What was your response to asking and answering the questions?
- How might the conversations have influenced the process or outcomes of the meeting/service?

Did you observe any of the following?

- Personal reflection on one another's journey of faith: where others have come from and where they are heading.
- A mutual trust and interest in one another's walk with God, with a stake in the health of that relationship.
- Attention to what it means to support everyday faith as a priority.

Adapting or adding to the questions

You may find ways of asking the questions so that they have more impact. Seek to shape them to your group so they encourage fruitful conversations:

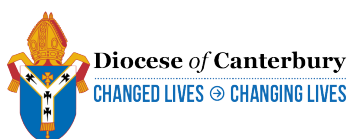
- Regarding their current relationships with Jesus/God and other people
- That are challenging and not too simple to answer
- That increase self-awareness of the discipleship journey
- That allow the different spiritual styles in any group to participate fully

Learning from the questions

Key to the Changing Lives Conversations is learning about how more confident faith might develop in your community. The learning might include areas of community life that enable renewed faith or that sap confidence and hinder growth. Be aware that some signs of resistance to the questions is to be expected!

Gauging the effects

As you use these questions over a period of time, the hope is that you will observe attitudes, beliefs, values or behaviours shifting as people think about how Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit are working in their lives as you use these questions over a period of time. Does this set of questions stimulate your community to be more responsive to the call of Christ in this present time? If not, why not?



With thanks to the Diocese of Canterbury for developing the Changing Lives Conversations www.canterburydiocese.org/changing-lives-conversations