



Sharing Experiences

When people come to this gathering, they will bring with them some observations and experiences to share. The challenge is to create the space for sharing that does not devolve into a needs assessment of your community. We are so deeply conditioned, as the church, to look for ways to help others that sometimes it can be very hard to put that instinct aside. This is an important part of the work of any church and should definitely be encouraged and supported.

Being with people instead of doing something for them is a very different posture.

It puts us in a position of receiving from someone else just as they are receiving from us. Whether it's a smile, a listening ear, or simply a shared experience, when we are focussed on being with someone, we need to be as fully present to them as they are to us.

The purpose of people coming back with experiences to share is to wonder together about how God is being revealed to us in the places where people gather. Many people are not used to looking at their everyday lives in this way or they might think that they don't have enough knowledge or expertise to have any authority to actually name God at work in what they are seeing. To help people settle into this practice of discerning God, we use questions similar to those used in *Dwelling in the Word*.

Listening Questions:

1. *As you listen to people's experiences, where does your imagination stop?*
2. *Which reported observations capture your attention?*
3. *How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging us?*

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Instead, they help to draw out our wondering about what God is doing. These questions also help us give language to this wondering and notice common experiences.



Facilitate Sharing Experiences

1. Invite each pair that worked together in Activity 1.3 to share about their experiences dwelling in places where people come to be with each other. Ask them to share their responses to the questions they were sent out with:
 - a. Who's there?
 - b. What are they doing?
 - c. What surprises you?
 - d. What raises your curiosity?
 - e. Is there anything that catches your attention in a way that you want to ask more questions or get more information?
2. While each pair is sharing, ask the rest of the group to listen using the **listening questions**:

Listening Questions:

1. *As you listen to people's experiences, where does your imagination stop?*
 2. *Which reported observations capture your attention?*
 3. *How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging us?*
3. After each pair has shared, invite the group to **feedback on their responses to the listening questions**. Write their responses on newsprint for everyone to see.
 4. Once this is captured on the newsprint, ask the group to take a few minutes in silence to reflect on what they are seeing in the responses.
 5. After this reflection, invite people ask them to **share what is capturing their attention** in the responses.
 6. Take down some brief notes of what common themes, questions and ideas you hear in the group's responses.