

Just Faith NETWORK



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In partnership with



November 2018

November calls to mind Thanksgiving, a time of harvest, family dinner, and seasonal change. It is also the month of Election Day--always scheduled for the first Tuesday of November. In this first monthly resource for the members of our new JustFaith Network, we want to acknowledge both. It is a time to be grateful and offer thanks for what we have received, as well as a time to be engaged in the democratic process of our country.

You will find in your November resources four different documents:

1. An **outline** that offers you the possibility of gathering a small group (friends, family members, and/or JF graduates) for a 2-hour session to discuss what is happening in your community, your nation, your family and to give thanks for what you have received.
2. A session that includes the discussion of a short **essay** written for JMF by Catholic theologian Ann Garrido, "Listening Toward Understanding." This text can be found in your member resources for this month or under the "short essays" category.
3. A separate version of the **outline** is also posted that is designed for individual use if you prefer to reflect on the theme on your own and engage in a meditation.
4. In addition to both outlines and the accompanying article, you will also find as part of this month resources a **recipe** for a stew that one of our JF graduates has shared with us as a metaphor for the richness and nourishing power of different elements coming together!

Remember, when you invite people to a gathering, make sure they all have a copy of the materials in advance and read it before you meet, you can download the PDF and email it to the group or make copies and hand them out if you have the opportunity to meet before the meeting.

JustFaith Ministries thanks you for your ongoing support and your commitment to fostering dialogue in your community! We hope you will enjoy this first monthly resource offering.

Blessings!

“A time of Everything”

Items Needed for Small Group Use:

- For prayer:
 - A pillar candle and matches or lighter;
 - A tablecloth and a Bible to set on a table open to Ecclesiastes 3;
 - A cross, an icon, an inspirational image, flowers... chose a symbol or object you feel comfortable bringing.
- A few small containers to pour water or scented oil so that you have one of these for every four people.
- Scented oil if you choose to use oil for the blessing ritual at the end.
- Laptop and screen for video.
- Copies of the closing prayer and blessing—see **Participant Handout** at the end.
- Snacks for the break if desired.
- Some brochures and flyers for JustFaith Ministries’ programs and network.

Schedule for this Session

Activity	Minutes
Gathering & Prayer	20 minutes
Readings & Discussion	30 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Announcements	10 minutes
Video & Discussion	30 minutes
Blessings & Prayer	20 minutes
Total	120

Gathering and Prayer (20 minutes)

Welcome everyone with these or similar words:

Friends, we are gathering today/tonight to prepare ourselves for this time: a time of Thanksgiving, a time of changes in our seasons, a time of changes in our political landscape, a time when this year is drawing to a close.

We want to take some time today/tonight to reflect on our harvest and the abundance we are blessed with; while celebrating our rich harvest, we also want to acknowledge the diversity of voices among us and learn how to listen to each other, even in the midst of differences and various challenges and divisions that our country, our families, and our communities face.

Let's first read from the beginning of Ecclesiastes chapter 3 (you may ask someone to share the reading and circulate the bible in the group or distribute **Participant Handout**):

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

*a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

—From the New International Version (NIV)

After reading this passage, invite everyone to quietly reflect on the time they are in, what has been the main activity of their past 6 months or so and how they would describe it in one word/verb.

Allow 5 minutes and then go around the circle and ask each person to complete the sentence:

My time is a time to/for...

Once everyone has shared, invite everyone into a moment of prayer.

Light the candle.

Read the following excerpt from Joyce Rupp's *Prayer of Seeds*, taken from the chapter entitled "Bringing the Harvest:"

The is the time of harvesting fruits, vegetables, and grains of the land. We come together in gratitude for the diversity and richness of what our good earth allows us to grow and produce for creaturely consumption. We also gather in gratitude for what our Creator grows and produces within our interior land, those virtues and positive qualities we have nurtured in our spirits. An abundance of fruitfulness resides among us. Let us draw encouragement from one another's harvest and rejoice in the maturation of the Holy One's love [especially when our harvest has also yielded difficult times and hardship].

Let us pray:

Sower of Seeds, you have planted in our hearts the potential for many gifts of your love to grow and ripen. Charity, authenticity, mercy, honesty, humility, forgiveness, loyalty, patience, understanding, courage, kindness, faith, respect, and other qualities reflective of your goodness dwell in our interior fields and garden. We gather here to recall what has grown and matured. We exult in the diversity and richness of our inner harvest and offer you our gratitude. [And for those who have experienced losses, we ask you to keep them in your light].

Amen

Reading and Discussion (30 minutes)

Make sure everyone has read the short essay by **Ann Garrido, "Listening Toward Understanding"** that you can find in your member account; you can download it in a PDF format and email it to your group in advance. This short essay was written for JFM and offers some thoughts about listening when parties come from different positions/backgrounds.

Introduce the conversation with these or similar words:

Over the past year or so, many of us have witnessed in our country and possibly in our families and communities, some divisions and antagonistic views, and often an inability to listen to each other. Ann Garrido, a Catholic theologian, offers in her essay some thoughts on deep listening based on her own experience.

Start the conversation with one or two of the following questions:

1. Ann Garrido frames her essay with the question "Who is right?" and how it is impossible to answer this question. Do you often ask this question? Do you feel, like her, that trying to determine who is right often leads to an impasse?

2. She suggests that “One of the most helpful ways we can listen to another person is to name the feelings undergirding what they are saying.” Can you name your own feelings when you try to share something that matters? How would you be able to hear someone else’s feelings?
3. Ann Garrido quotes David Augsburger: “Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people cannot tell the difference.” Can you see the link between deep listening and love in your life? When do you experience this connection?
4. How do you experience God listening to you?

Bring the conversation to a close and read, together, Ann Garrido’s prayer (see **Participant Handout**):

*Divine Creator, at the dawn of time, you fashioned an earth overflowing with life.
For six days you labored and on the seventh you stood back,
and you listened to the echo of all creation.
You have been listening ever since.
We praise and you receive our worship.
We cry and you hear our prayer.
We lament and you remember us.
Your ear is never deaf to our voice; your face never turned away from us.
And now, Creator God, I should like to learn to listen like you.
In times of tension, lament, and complaint, keep my ears open to the rumblings of emotions
and meaning just under the surface of what the other is trying to say.
May the Spirit swirl freely through my conversations that I may hear all that you would have
me to hear and understand all that you would have me understand.*

Break (10 minutes)

Offer some snacks to share, if desired.

Announcements (10 minutes)

Take some time to discuss JFM membership and programing—have membership cards available and some flyers and brochures for JFM current programs; don’t hesitate to contact JFM staff to request any promotional material. Discuss with your group the possibility of doing one of our programs together.

Video and Dicsussion (30 minutes)

Set up your computer and speakers and watch the short video (1’53”) from the American Psychological Association, “Dreading the Holidays? Tips for Dealing with Difficult Conversations.” Follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vakbyuleb0U>

After watching the video, introduce the conversation with these or similar words:

We are in a tense political time and a lot of debate has surrounded our Election Day this year. Political conversations may feel overwhelming at times, challenging at others. As we approach family time for the holidays, some of us may be anxious about getting together with family members and facing some difficult conversations. JFM is dedicated to deep listening, respect, and genuine dialogue. Let's discuss what may be helpful for each of us in achieving this in our own context.

Then start the discussion with one or two of the following questions:

1. How often do you feel at odds in your community or among family members when it comes to politics or general ideas?
2. How do you feel when conversations at the family table are getting heated? What is your first reaction?
3. "It's ok to disagree with someone you care about." How do you experience this in your daily life?
4. What are the tips you use when you are caught in a difficult conversation?
5. The video suggests that there is a "time for everything" and everyone needs to discern it. How does that resonate with the words of Ecclesiastes?

Bring the conversation to a close.

Take a few minutes of silence at the end of the conversation and invite everyone to think of ways they can stay calm in tense conversations: breathing, walking, counting...

Blessings and Prayer (20 minutes)

The last 30 minutes of your time together is devoted to prayer and a blessing ritual. Start with these or similar words:

As we approach the end of this year and we are getting ready to celebrate sacred times, let's pray together and invoke God's blessings on our journeys. Let's begin by sharing any intercession you may have at this time...

Allow time for everyone to share out loud or silently formulate intercessions.

Then listen to the musical version (3'16") of Taizé's song "O Lord Hear my Prayer" (you can find it by following this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0dg528YpG4>). Feel free to use any inspirational music if you have any specific one you would like to use.

Invite everyone to the ritual of blessing (see **Participant Handout**).

Light the candle and have some water or scented oil available in various containers for each person to pass around and use for the blessing ritual (approximately one container for every four people).

Introduce the ritual with these or similar words:

As we are about to part ways, let's take a moment to ask for God's blessings on our journeys and what is ahead of us.

Explain that everyone is invited to dip his/her fingers in the water/scented oil and, as one person reads the blessing, each person brings his/her fingers to the part of his/her body that is named. Read the first blessing and go around the circle:

Leader: *Dip your fingers in the water/ scented oil, touch the area around your eyes carefully.*
Say: “Bless my eyes that I may see you.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #1: *Dip again and touch your nose.*
Say: “Bless my nose that I may breathe your essence.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #2: *Dip again and touch your ears.*
Say: “Bless my ears that I may hear your wisdom.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #3: *Dip again and touch your mouth.*
Say: “Bless my mouth that I may speak your name.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #4: *Dip again and touch your heart.*
Say: “Bless my heart that I may feel your love.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #5: *Dip again and touch your feet.*
Say: “Bless my feet that I may walk in balance.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #6: *Dip again and rub your hands together.*
Say: “Bless my hands that I may share your healing in my work.”
Allow time for everyone to do the same.

—Inspired by Amber Wolfe: <http://heru-ra-ha.tripod.com/library/selfbless.html>

Conclude by listening to Taizé’s song “Holy Spirit Come to Us” (you can find the song here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zasyz-t\]kOg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zasyz-t]kOg)) or any inspirational music/song of your choice.

Conclude by sharing the following prayer—see **Participant Handout**:

Leader: **Great Creator God, God of perfect love and source of every perfect gift,
You call us to live together in community, for the common good and the
common wealth, in communion in this time and place and with all the saints
who have gone before us. For our life together you have created us as a body,**

the body of Christ, so created that all the members of our community, like all the parts of one body, must function together for the good of the whole.

Reader #1: You call us to live together in unity, that there may be no dissension within the body, but that the members always may care for one another and work together. You have so arranged our lives so that we know that if one of us suffers, all suffer together, just as if one is honored, all rejoice together (...).

Reader #3: We pray for all those who seek to build up strong and mutually supportive bonds of community. Many have been called to serve us. We pray (...) especially for the most vulnerable among us, the children, the young, those who are persecuted or misunderstood because they are different, immigrants, and [in this time of Thanksgiving, we pray for] the First Peoples of this land (...).

Reader #4: We express our gratitude and praise to you for sending so many gifted people to work among us. Help us to respect their efforts, to encourage them, to criticize constructively when needed but in ways that build them up, not tear them down, and to advocate for the support they need to carry out their work effectively. Remind us to give praise when praise is due, to honor those who give of themselves and to celebrate their accomplishments with thanksgiving.

Leader: We pray that you will guide the work of all those who have been called to help us find answers to the challenges we face so that our community may become the kind of wonderful home we so long for, a place others can admire and learn from. Thank you for blessing us with wonderful neighbors and for calling us to live together in this beautiful place in beautiful ways that bring glory and honor to you who have taught us how to love and to love unconditionally, more deeply and more fully than we can ever grasp. We give you all praise and thanksgiving and thank you for all our relations in this world and in heaven.

All: Amen.

—Adapted from United Church of Canada's Prayers for Indigenous People and Communities:
https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/prayers-for-indigenous-people-and-communities_0.docx

Invite everyone to share a sign of peace if desired.

Extinguish the candle.

Participants Handout

1) Biblical Text from Ecclesiastes 3:

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

—From the New International Version (*NIV*)

2) Prayer by Ann Garrido:

Divine Creator, at the dawn of time, you fashioned an earth overflowing with life.
For six days you labored and on the seventh you stood back,
and you listened to the echo of all creation.
You have been listening ever since.
We praise and you receive our worship.
We cry and you hear our prayer.
We lament and you remember us.
Your ear is never deaf to our voice; your face never turned away from us.
And now, Creator God, I should like to learn to listen like you.
In times of tension, lament, and complaint, keep my ears open to the rumblings of emotions
and meaning just under the surface of what the other is trying to say.
May the Spirit swirl freely through my conversations that I may hear all that you would have
me to hear and understand all that you would have me understand.

3) Blessings:

Leader: *Dip your fingers in the water/oil, touch the area around your eyes carefully.*

Say: “Bless my eyes that I may see you.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #1: *Dip again and touch your nose.*

Say: “Bless my nose that I may breathe your essence.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #2: *Dip again and touch your ears.*

Say: “Bless my ears that I may hear your wisdom.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #3: *Dip again and touch your mouth.*

Say: “Bless my mouth that I may speak your name.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #4: *Dip again and touch your heart.*

Say: “Bless my heart that I may feel your love.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #5: *Dip again and touch your feet.*

Say: “Bless my feet that I may walk in balance.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

Reader #6: *Dip again and rub your hands together.*

Say: “Bless my hands that I may share your healing in my work.”

Allow time for everyone to do the same.

—Inspired by Amber Wolfe: <http://heru-ra-ha.tripod.com/library/selfbless.html>

4) Closing Prayer:

- Leader:** Great Creator God, God of perfect love and source of every perfect gift, You call us to live together in community, for the common good and the common wealth, in communion in this time and place and with all the saints who have gone before us. For our life together you have created us as a body, the body of Christ, so created that all the members of our community, like all the parts of one body, must function together for the good of the whole.
- Reader #1:** You call us to live together in unity, that there may be no dissension within the body, but that the members always may care for one another and work together. You have so arranged our lives so that we know that if one of us suffers, all suffer together, just as if one is honored, all rejoice together (...).
- Reader #3:** We pray for all those who seek to build up strong and mutually supportive bonds of community. Many have been called to serve us. We pray (...) especially for the most vulnerable among us, the children, the young, those who are persecuted or misunderstood because they are different, immigrants, and [in this time of Thanksgiving, we pray for] the First Peoples of this land (...).
- Reader #4:** We express our gratitude and praise to you for sending so many gifted people to work among us. Help us to respect their efforts, to encourage them, to criticize constructively when needed but in ways that build them up, not tear them down, and to advocate for the support they need to carry out their work effectively. Remind us to give praise when praise is due, to honor those who give of themselves and to celebrate their accomplishments with thanksgiving.
- Leader:** We pray that you will guide the work of all those who have been called to help us find answers to the challenges we face so that our community may become the kind of wonderful home we so long for, a place others can admire and learn from. Thank you for blessing us with wonderful neighbors and for calling us to live together in this beautiful place in beautiful ways that bring glory and honor to you who have taught us how to love and to love unconditionally, more deeply and more fully than we can ever grasp. We give you all praise and thanksgiving and thank you for all our relations in this world and in heaven.
- All:** Amen.

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