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UNITING CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

Guide to hosting a table talk conversations on climate change

The basic idea

Table talk conversations allow people to share stories and connect with their community. These conversations start by helping communities identifying the things and values that we care about. The process then helps people connect these things with our experience of climate change and extreme weather, and how it threatens the things we love.

The main aim is to engage in a personal and constructive conversation about climate change even when we have different views. Remember over 70% of Australians are concerned about the climate change and believe we need to solve this problem. How do we solve big complex problems – by working together! This starts with conversations.

How it works

Participants share stories around tables (of 5-7 people) prompted by a series of questions posed by the Table Talk leader. You can have just one table or several. The venue could be a church or community hall, or someone's home.

Participants could come from a congregation, a group of congregations and from wider networks and community. It's up to you.

What the conversation covers

There are five main themes in the conversation:

- The things we value and care about
- How climate change is impacting the things we care about (and what our faith has to say about that)
- How we want things to be (our preferred future)
- What solutions there are to climate change (and help bring about our preferred future)
- Consider next steps: What we could do to help individually and collectively

The whole process takes from 60-90mins.

Uniting Climate

Uniting Climate sits within Uniting's Advocacy Team, which helps mobilise the wider Uniting Church NSW.ACT in pursuing social justice and the renewal of creation.

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Template Agenda

A template table talk agenda has enough time for everyone to be able to share, but also short and snappy to maintain good energy throughout the session.

You can adjust the agenda to suit the interests of your community and congregation. Would a presentation from a policy expert be interesting in the discussion? Or would a theological reflection resonate? Feel free to add it into the agenda!

Time	Item
2mins	**Acknowledgement of Country**
2mins	**Opening and introductions**
5mins	**What are we doing today?** - Outline the purpose of the table talk - Present the guidelines for participating in the table talk.
10mins	**Table talk Q.1: What are the things we care about the most?** - Share a story about what is something you care about, and what they say about the values that you hold? - Prompts like words ("community", "family", "security", "justice") or pictures can help the conversation start flowing. - The table talk leader should tell a pre-prepared story to model for the rest of the table.
10mins	**Table talk Q. 2: What is your experience of climate change and extreme weather?** - With the hot and stormy summers, fires and floods over the last couple years, what is your experience with extreme weather and climate change? - How might climate change affect the things we care about the most? - The table talk leader should tell a pre-prepared story to model for the rest of the table.
8mins	**Theological reflection (by minister or a congregational member)** - How does our Christian faith (or other faith tradition) affect our response to the challenge of global warming? - In what ways does it shape what we care about (values) and how we respond to the impacts of global warming? - Participants can reflect and share their reflections with the group.
10mins	**Table talk Q.3: What is your vision for a better future?** - Share what your vision for a better future look like – what would your community, neighbourhood, country look like? - Consider from a Christian faith perspective- what do we know of God's desired future? - The table talk leader should tell a pre-prepared story/reflection to model for the rest of the table.
10mins	**Presentation on climate solutions (by table talk host or an external speaker)** - While climate change poses a significant challenge for our world, there are things that people are doing and can do to fix it. - What solutions have you heard about? Which solutions will benefit your community?
2mins	**Call-to-Action & close.** We all want a better future for all – we need to take action together to secure this future by joining the Uniting Climate Action Network. Take a photo with a climate banner.

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Guidelines for our table talk conversations

To have respectful and productive conversation we ask participants to follow these guidelines:

Be curious and open to learning: Listen and be open to hearing all points of view. Let your desire to learn and understand others, exceed your desire to persuade others to your point of view.

Show respect and suspend judgement: We humans tend to judge others. Setting judgment aside allows us to listen openly and model genuine respect.

Seek alignment rather than agreement: Alignment is shared intention, whereas agreement is having a shared or opinion. In this conversation we can look for shared intentions, even if we disagree on some beliefs and opinions.

Share authentically: Share what is important to you. Speak genuinely from your personal and heart felt experience. Honour others' attempts to do the same.

Take responsibility for your participation and the quality of conversation: The principle "make space, take space" can help. If you speak easily and confidently, remember to 'make space' for others to speak. If you are naturally quiet, then 'take space' to share your thoughts and experience.

Remember "the most important thing you can do to fight climate change: talk about it." – Katherine Hayhoe

We are here to support you to host climate table talks!

The Uniting Advocacy team is ready to support Uniting Church congregations to host table talks. We have more in-depth resources and can provide coaching, training and support to help you make these table talks happen.

To find out more contact Jon O'Brien in the Uniting Advocacy team on at joobrien@uniting.org

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