

Module Four:

Single-Session Guided Group Discussion

Guided Discussion

People sometimes may wish to discuss conditions of membership. The following guidelines are provided for single-session discussions.

Size of Group

For a maximum sharing opportunity, we recommend no more than ten to twelve people.

Use of Facilitator

Engage a facilitator whose sole job is to guide the discussion. To explore deeply held perspectives, participants need to feel free from evaluation and judgment. The combination of a process and skilled facilitation can provide that opportunity.

Choosing a Facilitator

The job of the facilitator is important to the success of any group. The following list will help in selecting someone.

Choose someone who can

- facilitate the sharing of perspectives;
- be attuned to individual and group dynamics;
- be sensitive to the comfort/discomfort of participants and refrain from trying to “fix” disquieting moments;
- hold participants to the guidelines;
- provide an impartial presence, setting aside per-

sonal opinions so that respect for all participants and their views can be maintained;

- use open-ended questions to deepen the conversation;
- guide balanced participation;
- not be compelled to share personal opinions and experiences;
- maintain confidentiality.

Facilitators will be expected to act solely in that role, and not otherwise participate. This allows the facilitator to focus on the group and participants' experience. In that vein, facilitators should not

- share personal perspective;
- talk too much as they guide the session.

Group Guidelines

Guidelines are meant to help create a safe and respectful environment.

You may post the guidelines and ask the group if it would like to use them. The group may want to develop its own list or add to this one. One guideline very important to any group is to uphold confidentiality.

Guidelines for Session Facilitators

- Uphold confidentiality. Life experiences and perspectives shared in each session belong to the one who shared them. They are the sacred trust of each listener. If you wish to share a story

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that's not your own, please ask permission of the owner before sharing it outside the group.

- Demonstrate respect for each other.
- Honor all perspectives.
- Offer perspectives without attempting to persuade another to your point of view.
- Let one person speak at a time.

Room Arrangement

Arrange the chairs in a circle.

Writing Material

Participants may want to record some thoughts to send to the First Presidency. It can be helpful if you have a white board, flip chart, or chalkboard.

Talking Piece

You may wish to use a talking piece. It is an object passed from person to person around the circle. The holder may speak while others listen without thinking about a response. It assures speakers that they will not be interrupted. It enables the contribution of quiet people who otherwise might be unlikely to assert themselves in open dialogue.

You may select a talking piece that has significance to you, the group, the topic, or just something easy to hold.

Discussion Guidelines

- Open with prayer, a well-known hymn, or song. You may wish to review *Listen: A Centering Activity*, found at www.CofChrist.org/CofM.
- Make introductions to help those in the circle who may not be familiar with everyone.

- Explain your role as facilitator.
- Share the discussion guidelines or have the group create its own. If members create their own, be sure to include a guideline related to confidentiality. It is helpful to have guidelines written and visible for each successive session.
- Explain the use and significance of the talking piece, if you use one.
- Continue to get better acquainted, even if your group has attended church together for some time. Ask everybody to share their favorite time of year and why. You can use the talking piece for people to respect talking one at a time.
- Review the "Introduction" material on pages 1–5 of this resource. Present the "Focus Question" on page 8.
- Discuss how your experience has influenced your perspective on whether persons should be rebaptized to become Community of Christ members.

Conditions of Membership Spectrum

Group Activity

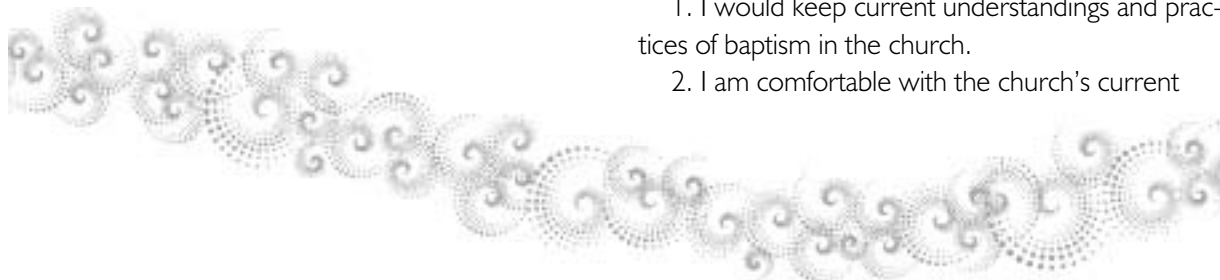
(Facilitators: The handout for the activities in this section is on page 72 . It may be copied for your group members.)

At this time, where would you place yourself on a spectrum of viewpoints regarding conditions of membership? If none of the statements describes your perspective, insert your own words. Then mark your position on the spectrum.

(See optional activity for an approach that may be preferred for your group.)

1. I would keep current understandings and practices of baptism in the church.

2. I am comfortable with the church's current



practices, but I want to hear more about other viewpoints.

3. I am uncertain about the church’s current practices, and I need to hear more about other possible approaches.

4. I would allow persons who have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches to have the choice of being rebaptized in Community of Christ. Then, whether they are rebaptized or not, confirm them members of the church.

5. I would accept the baptisms of those who have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches and confirm them members of the church.

6. I would accept any type of Christian baptism (immersion, pouring, and sprinkling), except infant baptism, and confirm people members of the church.

7. I would accept any type of previous Christian commitment (believer’s baptism, infant baptism) and confirm people members of the church after a time of preparation.

8. I would accept any previous Christian commitment and receive people as members of the church who want to join.

9. I would not have any conditions for membership other than desire to join.

Optional Activity

At this time, state as clearly as possible your viewpoint on conditions of membership and re-baptism. As a group, place yourselves in relation to each other on the following spectrum with “1” being “no change” and “9” being “no requirements for church membership other than a desire to join.”

Group Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Optional Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Send a summary of your experience to the First Presidency c/o Andrew Shields, World Church secretary.