

an interfaith dialogue on

religion  
& VIOLENCE  
untangling the roots of conflict

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION GROUPS Guidelines

We offer these suggestions to provide a safe and welcoming group in which you may explore the issues of faith and theology that emerge from the symposium on *Religion & Violence: Untangling the Roots of Conflict*. Your group may wish to modify these suggestions in the light of its particular needs, experience and circumstances.

### **Create a group where everyone counts:**

- Share your thoughts, feelings, experiences, and questions as openly as seems appropriate
- Speak briefly and to the point so that others may have an equal opportunity to offer their contributions
- Be free to remain silent and do not press others to speak if they are not willing or ready to do so
- Listen to others to understand their points of view and know them better as well as to clarify your own positions. Avoid trying to convince others that you are right.

### **Speak for yourself, not others. Some examples of “do’s” and “don’t’s” are:**

- a. I think that... (not Christians believe...)*
- b. I feel, glad, sad, mad, scared (not Most people feel that...)*
- c. I wish that... (not Everyone wants...)*
- d. I notice that... (not It is obvious that...)*
- e. My practice is... (not All civilized people...)*

### **Maintain confidences:**

- Keep to yourself who said what or reveal personal details contributed by others
- Feel free to share the topics that were discussed and their impact on you

Adapted from John M. de Beer, “Guidelines for Connect Groups.” 10/1/05

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**Monday, January 21, 2008 – 5:30-6:30 PM (EST)/4:30-5:30 PM (Central)**

**Purpose:** This session, which takes place prior to the Presiding Bishop's sermon, is the initial opportunity to meet others in our reflection group, establish group guidelines, and begin to engage the topic of the Trinity Institute 38th National Theological Conference, *Religion & Violence: Untangling the Roots of Conflict*.

**Goals:**

- Meet our companions and begin building community.
- Find our own voices prior to hearing the five speakers.
- Offer norms for our conversation & introduce the reflection process.
- Identify our interest in and connection to this year's topic — religion and violence.
- Listen to one another and create a safe space.
- Develop our own self-reflectiveness.

**Plan:** Total time 1 hour

3 Minutes: Welcome everyone and offer an opening prayer by Katharine Jefferts Schori.

10 Minutes: Ask participants to introduce themselves (name, home).

10 Minutes: Review the schedule for the conference and establish the norms for the life of our group.

30 Minutes: By mutual invitation, ask the group to respond to the following question:

What in my life draws me to this conference?

5 Minutes: General Discussion

2 Minutes: Final questions

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**Tuesday, January 22, 2008 – 11:00 am-12:15 PM (EST)/10 -11:15 AM (Central) —  
Following James H. Cone’s presentation**

**Purpose:** James H. Cone presents us with a difficult reality. He lets none of us off the hook. This session is an opportunity to reflect on the theology of James H. Cone and consider its implications for us.

**Goals**

- Encounter the theologies of Katharine Jefferts Schori and James H. Cone and examine how they affect us.
- Identify the world James H. Cone describes to us.
- Explore what Cone calls us to affirm or do personally and in community.

**Plan:** One hour and fifteen minutes

10 Minutes: Gathering and opening prayer provided by James Cone.

Questions to consider

20 Minutes: What did you hear from Katharine Jefferts Schori and James Cone that resonates with or challenges your own experience?

20 Minutes: Describe the roots of violence in the world Cone shows us.

20 Minutes: What do you feel called to do as a result of this conversation?

5 Minutes: Close

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**Tuesday, January 22, 2008 – 3:45-5:00 PM (EST)/2:45-4:00 PM (Central) —  
Following Susannah Heschel’s presentation**

**Purpose:** Susannah Heschel brings a Jewish perspective on how religion gives meaning to violence for both perpetrators and victims. This session is an opportunity to explore the implications of her thoughts for our theology and interactions.

**Goals:**

- Identify how Susannah Heschel depicts violence and religion.
- Consider how the roots of violence and religion may be entangled in our own lives.
- Explore next steps in light of our encounter with Heschel.

**Plan:** 1 hour and fifteen minutes

10 Minutes: Gathering and opening with prayer provided by Susannah Heschel.

Questions to consider

20 Minutes: What is the picture of religion and violence that Susannah Heschel describes?

20 Minutes: In what way does violence shape my community?

20 Minutes: What steps can we take to recognize and transform narratives of violence and their exploitation of religious language?

5 Minutes: Close

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**Wednesday, January 23, 2008 – 10:45 AM -12:00 PM (EST)/9:45-11:00 AM (Central)**  
— Following James Carroll’s presentation

**Purpose:** Awakened to violence in his Roman Catholic background, James Carroll calls for a radical rethinking of Christian theology that de-emphasizes sacrificial bloodshed. This session is an opportunity to explore the implications of his position.

**Goals:**

- Identify the most important points in Carroll’s presentation.
- Discover our relationship to the themes Carroll raises.
- Imagine how we can make things more peaceful in a diverse world.

**Plan:** One hour and fifteen minutes

5 Minutes: Gathering and opening prayer provided by James Carroll

Questions to consider

10 Minutes: What did you find to be Carroll’s most provocative point that may lead to untangling some of the roots of violence?

15 Minutes: What is your personal position in relation to Carroll’s point of view?

20 Minutes: Given the points Carroll has made, in what ways have you been drawn to alter your perspective?

20 Minutes: In what ways could Carroll’s provocation make our own relations more peaceful with people whose convictions differ from ours?

5 Minutes: Close

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**Wednesday, January 23, 2008 – 2:45-4:00 PM (EST)/1:45-3:00 PM (Central) —  
Following Tariq Ramadan's presentation**

**Purpose:** Tariq Ramadan brings a European Muslim perspective to bear on the relationship between religion and violence. The purpose of this session is to explore the theological implications of his presentation.

As we prepare to return home it is an occasion to name some of the implications of this conference for us, to pray for one another and to say farewell to one another.

**Goals:**

- Identify the most salient points and questions Ramadan raises for us.
- Reflect on the implications of the presentation by Tariq Ramadan.
- Name the personal implications of this conference in terms of insights and actions.
- Take time to say farewell.

**Plan:** One hour and fifteen minutes

5 Minutes: Gather and offer prayer provided by Tariq Ramadan

Questions to Consider

10 Minutes: What is the most surprising point or question that Ramadan raises for you?

15 Minutes: As a person of faith, what can I learn from Tariq Ramadan?

15 Minutes: Drawing from what we have learned from Tariq Ramadan, what might a faith community that embodies humility look like?

15 Minutes: Given what I have learned from this conference concerning the roots of violence, what are constructive ways to expand my embrace of others while honoring my own faith tradition?

10 Minutes: Respond on the 3 x 5 card provided to you:

Name one thing you intend to do as a result of this conference.

Collect the responses on newsprint. These will be scrolled on the video at the conclusion of the panel.

5 Minutes: It is now time to say good bye to one another and then to attend the final panel.