

# STARTING CONVERSATIONS

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Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.  
**The people of The United Methodist Church®**

# STARTING CONVER



This guide will help your Rethink Church Event team think about practical ways to engage others in faith conversation and continue the conversation long past your event. You will find additional help in the Sending Forth planner available at

[http://www.umcom.org/atf/cf/%7B60C02017-4F6A-4F3B-883A-4AFAECE1182F%7D/Prepare\\_to\\_Engage.pdf](http://www.umcom.org/atf/cf/%7B60C02017-4F6A-4F3B-883A-4AFAECE1182F%7D/Prepare_to_Engage.pdf)

*Note: A bibliography follows with resources to use in study and congregational development.*

As your congregation builds stronger relationships with area businesses and community leaders, you will encounter an interesting intersection. People with whom you may not normally speak about faith may begin talking about religion.

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## PREPARE YOURSELF!

The gospel is best conveyed when a person's cup is filled and naturally spills over into the community. Personal and corporate prayer, scripture reading and group meditation will center you before you set faith into action.

*Consider how you will communicate with volunteers prior to your day of action. If possible, get them to register for daily email devotions as a way to take in the goodness of God's mercy. (<http://upperroom.org/devotional/>)*

## REMEMBER YOUR OWN FAITH STORY.

By grace, we are brought to faith, and by grace, we are saved. Think about how grace was conveyed to you and consider how that will influence your own faith sharing. Who was involved? A school teacher, friend, parent, Sunday school teacher, etc.? When were you brought to Christ? Where? The more vivid your recollection, the more dynamic your story will be.

*Invite others to share their stories with friends and family before the event. As they recall the details of their journey, participants will find it easier to share with others.*

## OTHERS WILL REMEMBER YOU . . .

*by the way you make them feel.* Help others feel that you are interested in what they have to say by listening attentively. Make eye contact, ask questions, nod and affirm.

## WHEN LISTENING . . .

*to questions and comments about religion, try not to react!* Think about ways to keep the conversation going, instead of shutting down. Those who believe the church has hurt or judged them may in turn, judge the church harshly. You may be able to build a bridge back to church . . . and to God.

*If you have time for role play, provide volunteers with some of these questions/comments. Let them rate the other person based on their listening ability and how they handled difficult comments.*

1. I don't go to church – I worship God in my own way.
2. I used to go to church but I just felt people were hypocritical.
3. Church is irrelevant to daily living.
4. I don't like having to get dressed up on my day off.
5. Church seems more judgmental than loving.
6. Why should I want to be a part of church? I'm a member of the Rotary Club!

## TAKE WHAT YOU LEARNED AND PUT IT INTO ACTION!

If you hear someone enjoys a particular kind of service work, connect him or her with others in your congregation who have similar interests.

# SHARE YOUR FAITH STORY.

**Kwasi Kena,**

Director of Evangelism Ministries,

General Board of Discipleship

Sometimes Christians don't quite know how to share their faith stories. Thankfully, with the help of a few "*story prompts*," most begin talking about their journey with Jesus with ease.

Story prompts provide a frame upon which your story can be built. Here's an example:

*Describe a time when a meal you prepared didn't turn out well.*

The prompt helps you recall both the memory and the emotion of the moment. That dual recall provides the framework for a compelling story. Say what you see (*memory*), feel what you say (*emotion*).

Here are some story prompts from *Your Church Can Thrive* by Harold Percy:

Generally there are two groups of people in the body of Christ. One group can name the day the hour and moment of their salvation. The second group can't recall a time when they weren't Christian. How do you get both groups to articulate their faith?

Ask them to share their faith stories in three chapters.

# GROUP ONE

*Those who can name the day, hour, and moment of salvation:*

## CHAPTER 1: YOUR LIFE BEFORE CHRIST

This is your “before” photo. What were you like before meeting Christ? Sometimes it helps to write down major events that summarize what you were like at this stage of your life.

## CHAPTER 2: HOW DID YOU COME TO FAITH IN CHRIST?

This is your turning point. What turned you toward Christ?

## CHAPTER 3: YOUR LIFE SINCE ACCEPTING CHRIST

This is your “after” photo. What’s noticeably different about you now?

# GROUP TWO

*Those who can't remember when they weren't Christians.*

## CHAPTER 1: YOUR LIFE IN A CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

How did this Christian environment influence you?

## CHAPTER 2: WHEN DID YOU CLAIM THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR YOURSELF?

You may have been baptized as an infant, but something or someone caused you to choose faith in Christ. What led to your personal affirmation of Christianity?

## CHAPTER 3: YOUR LIFE SINCE CLAIMING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

How has your faith taken root in you now? You may want to list milestone events.

*Practice sharing your faith in three chapters in small groups at church, with family and friends. Be honest. Be sincere. Trust God.*

**Offer information about your congregation.** Use tri-fold cards, available online for customization, to share service and worship offerings. They are easy to carry and to give to people on the day of your event and throughout the year.

## RESOURCES THAT DEAL WITH **ONE-ON-ONE FAITH SHARING:**

*Holy Conversation: Talking About God in Everyday Life* by Richard Peace

<http://www.amazon.com/Holy-Conversation-Talking-About-Everyday/dp/0830811192>

*Irresistible Evangelism: Natural Ways to Open Others to Jesus* by Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock

[http://www.amazon.com/Irresistible-Evangelism-Natural-Others-Jesus/dp/0764426265/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1271717887&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Irresistible-Evangelism-Natural-Others-Jesus/dp/0764426265/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1271717887&sr=1-1)

*Witness* by Ron Crandall

<https://bookstore.upperroom.org/pcd/eServCart?iServ=MjgzMDE2MTU3NCZpUGFnZUIkPTEyODE5NSZpSW52SWQ9NTEwMDQmaVNrdUxpc3Q9JmlTdWJUZXJtPTA=>

*“Faith Sharing: Easy as 1...2...3...”* by Kwasi Kena

<http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMKsG&b=4912925&ct=7131493>

## RESOURCES FOR HELPING **CONGREGATIONS:**

*Your Church Can Thrive* by Harold Percy

[http://www.amazon.com/Your-Church-Can-Thrive-Congregations/dp/0687022568/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1271717991&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Your-Church-Can-Thrive-Congregations/dp/0687022568/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1271717991&sr=1-1)

*Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* by Martha Grace Reese

<http://www.amazon.com/Unbinding-Gospel-Real-Life-Evangelism/dp/0827238045>

*Just Walk Across the Room* by Bill Hybels

<http://www.justwalkacrosstheroom.com/>

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