



A safe space that embraces mutual respect encourages advancement of decision making for a greater good. This is the design of a tool called the Talanoa Dialogue that was used by leadership of The U.N. Climate Change across the globe. ELCA faith and community leaders sampled the process during the 2019 ELCA Advocacy Convening in Washington, D.C.

Consider using the process in your congregation, group or community to hear one another's voices on a theme you identify among pivotal issues of our day.

## WHAT IS TALANOA?

**At its core, the Talanoa Dialogue is about stories.** Around a theme, participants engage in conversation through the lens of their experience.

⇒ **Where are we now?**    ⇒ **Where do we want to go?**    ⇒ **How do we get there?**

Talanoa is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The Talanoa process involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through storytelling. It fosters stability and inclusiveness, and it builds trust and advance knowledge through empathy and understanding.

Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and therefore inconsistent with the Talanoa concept.

## PROCESS BACKGROUND

The Talanoa Dialogue was launched at the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2017 when COP23 presidency was held by the Republic of Fiji. Dialogue served to take stock of collective efforts to reduce emissions and build greater resilience in line with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and shape future climate action plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions. The Paris Agreement's central goal is to keep the global average temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Learn more from "[The Paris Agreement and the Talanoa Dialogue](#)" in the ELCA Advocacy blog (8/24/18).

Through leadership of ELCA Advocacy and other partners, a Talanoa Dialogue during the 2018 Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, Calif. in fall yielded a faith-based submission from ecumenical voices for consideration by the UNFCCC secretariat.



ELCA leaders try Talanoa Dialogue during the 2019 Convening - "Prepared to Care: Our Advocacy in Light of Disasters Intensified by Climate Change"

## SOME FEATURES OF A TALANOA DIALOGUE

- ⇒ The dialogue should be constructive, facilitative and solutions oriented.
- ⇒ The dialogue should not lead to discussions of a confrontational nature in which individuals or groups are singled out.
- ⇒ The process should advance knowledge through common understanding.
- ⇒ The process should promote relationship and cooperation.
- ⇒ The process should create a platform on which better decision-making for the collective good can be recognized.

## READY TO GET STARTED?

### GROUND RULES

**TIME:** Set expectation of how many minutes each speaker will get.

**FACILITATOR ROLE:** Facilitators do not direct conversation, only facilitate its flow. Facilitators are asked to encourage all to speak, mindful when someone has not yet had a chance.

**SPEAKER ROLE:** Urge participants to freely tell their personal story.

**TONE:** Urge and manage showing respect for one another.

**ASSURANCE:** In this process, there are no right or wrong responses.

**EXPECTATIONS:** Let participants know what will happen with their input/comments after the Talanoa Dialogue.

### KEY PLAYERS

- ⇒ Facilitator or co-facilitators
- ⇒ Note takers
- ⇒ Time keeper
- ⇒ Participants



### THEN

Use what the process reveals in future decisions and actions for common good.

## THE ROOM

Typically, dialogue is conducted in a circle. Depending on the number of participants, multiple dialogue circles may be preferred.

### STORYTELLING AROUND YOUR THEME

Ask for stories and comments, emphasizing the goal of listening and seeing how to move forward together. Whatever topic you have identified, these three questions can guide its exploration:



- 1) Where are we now?
- 2) Where do we want to be?
- 3) How do we get there?

### NOTE TAKING

By assigning the role of note taking, others are free to be fully present as speakers and listeners. These notes will capture the essence of what has been discussed.

- 1) What were the most significant points raised during this discussion relative to the session's theme?
- 2) What main points could we convey in a statement or external report?
- 3) What significant points or calls to action arose?

*“Christians fulfill their vocation diversely and are rich in the variety of the gifts of the Spirit. ... Because they share common convictions of faith, they are free, indeed obligated, to deliberate together on the challenges they face in the world.” - "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," page 5*

**Questions?** Contact the ELCA Advocacy office at [washingtonoffice@ELCA.org](mailto:washingtonoffice@ELCA.org).