



hearts set on
PILGRIMAGE

PREPARING LGBTI PEOPLE OF FAITH TO PARTICIPATE IN DIALOGUE WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

*"Blessed are those whose strength is in You,
whose heart is set on pilgrimage..."*

Psalm 84:5

hearts set on pilgrimage

*Preparing LGBTI People of Faith to participate
in dialogue with religious leaders*

*a process designed and developed by Positive Vibes
in collaboration with FRI, FOCCISA
and the Global Interfaith Network (GIN)*

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An Introduction

For more than 20 years, LGBTI persons of faith and organizations, such as Inclusive and Affirming Ministries, Tulinam and the House of Prayer and Worship, have engaged in dialogues with church leaders in the Southern African region on the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity. As active founding members of GIN – The Global Interfaith Network For People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expression – this focus became even stronger when religious dialogue was consistently identified as a priority area to engage in by other GIN members from 2012 onwards.

Simultaneously the Christian Councils in Southern Africa have engaged in a program called *One Body*, which addresses the issues of HIV, AIDS, health and gender-based violence. The main themes in this material are the inclusive church, human sexuality and human dignity inherent in every human being. This work has made the Christian Councils/Council of Churches in most countries in Southern African prepared to relate these topics to the life situations of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans persons and intersex people.

FRI, the Norwegian Organization for Gender and Sexual Diversity, has supported the development of a supplement to the *One Body* material called “*The churches response to violence against marginalized people such as LGBTI persons.*” This material invites member churches of the national Christian Councils to engage in dialogues which explore the *One Body* issues of values, principles and behaviours integral to dignity and inclusion, inviting reflection and dialogue on LGBTI and faith.

GIN is a global, membership-driven network of mostly LGBTI people of faith that focuses on developing and sharing positive, life-affirming interpretations of faith which support the human rights of people of all sexes, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. GIN provides resources, support, networking and convenings for its members, allies and partners. In the *One Body* process GIN plays the specific role of bringing LGBTIQ people of faith together and providing them with the necessary tools to participate fully and comprehensively in dialogues with religious leaders in a respectful and productive way.

Positive Vibes is a Southern-based regional intermediary organisation working in health and justice-related human rights programming, particularly in support of marginalised populations. PV’s experience lies in developing and delivering innovative participatory methodologies to stimulate and provoke, to foster empathy and resilience, to promote change in attitudes and perceptions, and to encourage an open and free discourse.

Collaboration between GIN-members, FRI and PV has resulted in the development of *Hearts Set on Pilgrimage*, a process guide to a 5-day experience to prepare LGBTI People of faith to participate in dialogue with religious leaders. The dialogues will be facilitated by facilitators selected by the Councils. We envisage the participation of LGBTI people of faith as *Dialogue Partners* to represent the lived experience of that community in conversations about that community, at such time as Councils may be ready for such engagement.

Aim | Objective of the Curriculum

- To prepare and equip LGBTI people of faith to participate in dialogue with religious leaders
- To build the internal capabilities of LGBTI people of faith to claim their faith with confidence and resilience, as part of the community of believers.

Vision | Hope for the Process

We hope that this material over time, can have an impact at global scale. We want it to be available and accessible to members of GIN for application around the world. We think it can contribute to:

- Building communities of faith that are diverse and where the fullness of common humanity is celebrated.
- Faith communities that are welcoming and inclusive, safe spaces that demonstrate respect of human dignity.
- LGBTI People of Faith around the world who confidently claim their power and space to participate in the community of faith.

Direction | Approach to the Curriculum

The curriculum draws on several design considerations to inform its development and delivery:

- The material incorporates CONTENT, METHOD and PROCESS.
- Readiness to engage in dialogue will require that LGBTI People of Faith demonstrate a combination of capacities and capabilities: internal personal development and spiritual maturing; ability to think critically, conceptually, reflexively; to listen and question; ability to express spiritual experience by articulating common, simple theology; specific dialogue skills to articulate and frame messages; an attitude and disposition to

engage and sustain respectful dialogue; the ability to manage conflict; sensitivity to culture and context.

- *Pilgrimage* and *Journey* are helpful metaphors utilised throughout the curriculum to frame the human experience and the faith experience, and to show the link between the secular and sacred.
- The curriculum attempts to describe a process during which there should be no artificial separation between spiritual, emotional, intellectual/cognitive exercises; these components should be integrated throughout.
- The curriculum is a complement to material in the *One Body* texts, so that they speak to each other as resource and reference materials.

Considerations | Notes to Facilitators and Organisers

In delivering “Hearts Set on Pilgrimage”, facilitators should keep the following considerations in mind:

- The workshop is not a training; it is a process of co-discovery, personalisation, personal formation and preparation. While this document outlines – in considerable detail – a systematic step by step process, it should not be seen as a fixed script. Instead, it is a **process guide**, and relies on the insight and discretion of the facilitation team to apply it optimally with different groups in different contexts.
 - **Facilitators** act as guides, supporting participants through the process, and maintaining an appropriate balance between order, structure, freedom and flexibility. Facilitators should avoid seeing their role as that of trainer, instructor, presenter or expert.
 - Each group will be different. Different participants will bring into the workshop different perspectives, experiences, personalities and capabilities. And each participant will have the capacity to think for themselves. Facilitators should ensure there is sufficient **space, freedom and invitation** for participants to make their contributions, to supplement the existing content, and to have that contribution celebrated within the process as it moves forward. The suggested content in this process guide should complement flexible facilitation.
 - At various points throughout this document, **“Notes to Facilitators”** are offered for deeper insight and understanding into particular exercises, approaches or methodology, or to explain the rationale behind specific content or methods.
 - This process is intended to support LGBTI people of faith to feel prepared within themselves – mentally, psychologically, spiritually – and equipped – with ways of thinking and ways of speaking – to engage in dialogue with religious leaders. It is important throughout the workshop that facilitators help to **establish and clarify the tone** for that engagement: not combative; not oppositional; affirming **commonality and ‘common theology’** within one body of faith, despite diversity.
 - As much as possible, throughout this document, reference is made to both **‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’**. These terms and concepts are not interchangeable, but they are obviously interrelated, and both are relevant to this discussion with religious leaders. Facilitators should exercise care and sensitivity that terminology is clear, and that language is inclusive throughout the process.
 - Facilitators should be aware – especially where this process guide is used specifically in the context of FOCCISA Dialogues – that the strategic entry point into conversation with religious leaders has been agreed and structured around, broadly, **‘violence and marginalisation by the Church’**, under which theme LGBTI people have been included.
 - The **scriptural texts** that are referenced throughout this process guide are a small selection from the wealth of scripture that could be drawn from to speak to many of these issues. They are not intended to be exhaustive.
 - Facilitators should familiarise themselves with all of the texts suggested and assess – based on their insight into the requirements and capacity of each particular group; and based on the interest and appetite of each group – the range and depth with which each, or some, of the texts should be explored.
 - This process is based in personalisation and reflection, towards deepening a way of thinking. Texts provided are a springboard – a catalyst; a trigger – for thought, discussion and dialogue. Participants should be encouraged to reference and introduce other texts as they come to mind, adding to the depth and richness of the process.
- Participants should, similarly, be encouraged – consistent with the spirit of dialogue – to question, to think for themselves, to disagree, to frame alternative interpretations as they work out their own theological truths and perspectives.

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Workshop Materials

The workshop is designed to be creative, interactive and tactile, engaging the intellect, the emotions, the senses. The following materials and equipment are recommended:

- Flipchart-stand
- Flipchart paper
- Prestik (*Bostik, Bluetak, Sticky Stuff*)
- A3 white paper/card for personal theology boards
- Assorted colours chisel-tipped markers
- A portable loudspeaker with Bluetooth, a USB port, or an Auxiliary cable for music
- An attractive notebook suitable as a journal for each participant.
- An A4 plastic envelope folder, or carry-bag, for each participant
- Nametags for each participant
- Pens for each participant
- Small pot of playdough for each participant.
- Table cloth for a permanent altar (optional)
- A wooden cross and a Bible for the altar
- Post-it notes
- Guardian angel basket/box
- 4 boxes of oil pastels
- Other art materials (markers, pencil crayons, crayons etc.)
- A selection of small stones/pebbles
- 1 large liturgical candle
- 20 – 25 small tealight candles (at least one for each participant)
- Bowl of water and a towel
- 25 x 30 cm rainbow-coloured ribbon
- Assorted coloured A4 card
- At least 3 pairs of scissors
- Magazines for cutting up
- Assorted still images/photographs representing people in dialogue, and “participation”
- Box of straight pins or safety pins
- Optional: bag of sweets for “prizes” for the presentations on Day 5.

Identity & Journey

PREPARATIONS FOR DAY ONE

- **Workshop "packs"** should have been made up the previous day in a plastic folder and include a journal notebook, a pen, nametag, a programme for the week and the private contemplation reflections.
- Before the workshop starts, the **altar** should be set up on a table at the front of the room with a Bible and a Cross, candles and other suitable natural things like stones and leaves and flowers. The rainbow flag can provide an evocative backdrop to the altar.
- **The playdough** should be ready for use in the Devotional Opening.
- Ensure you have a **suitable box or basket** for the introduction to the guardian angel activity. **Post-it notes** are required.
- **Art materials and A4 paper** needed for the Journey story telling exercise.
- **The ribbons, stones, candles, water and instructions** for each station should be available for the 5 stations in the ritual closing. You should also have some **prayerful and reflective music** available to play in the background.

A. Welcome and Introductions (20 minutes)

Start by welcoming the group to the workshop and introducing yourself.

Invite them to introduce themselves to the group, sharing:

- *The name you would like to be addressed as for the duration of the workshop.*
- *What gender pronoun you would prefer, if any.*
- *The organization/church you represent.*

In pairs, with the person sitting next to them, they should share:

- *A favourite scripture, quote, Bible character or song and why this has significance for you.*

Those who want to can then share their verses in plenary

B. Devotional/Ritual Opening (40 minutes)

Aims

1. That LGBTI people of faith are reminded, through affirming scripture, of God's intention and promise in creating human beings who are "fearfully and wonderfully made".
2. To think about what the creating process is like.

Materials and Equipment

1. Playdough

As facilitators, you will be leading the spiritual opening and closing on the first day.

In many ways, this "sets the scene" for how the groups will conduct these rituals over the rest of the workshops so it is important to do these sensitively, and to role model how the following sessions might be conducted. This first opening should be celebratory – of who we are.



METHOD

1. Start by reading **Psalm 139: 13 – 16**. This is an affirmation of God’s deep knowledge of, and love for us. We are made in God’s image, and we can celebrate it!
2. These verses talk of God creating us in our “inmost being”, of “knitting us together in (our) mother’s womb”. That we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”; that we were not made hidden in “that secret place”. The implication here is that God knows us and what God has made is good. We can confidently and proudly stand in this knowledge.
3. Hand out the pots of playdough to participants. Let them spend 15 minutes playing with the dough, and then shaping themselves into the dough. This could be a figure of themselves or an abstract concept of who they are.
4. After 15 minutes, ask:
 - *What was the creating process like for you?*
 - *How do you feel about what you have made?*
 - *How do you think God feels about us, the people God created, in all our diversity?*
5. Finish with a prayer: we are starting a journey together for the week; offer an invitation to bring **all of who we are, which is how God has made us**, to this process.
6. Participants could place their figure on the altar table at the front or simply keep the playdough to mould other symbols during the week.



C. What lies ahead (60 minutes)

Aims

1. Outlining the context and process of the workshop.
2. Establishing the hopes and aspirations of the group and setting up psychological safety nets.

Materials and Equipment

1. Programme for the week
2. Post-it notes
3. Box or basket
4. Journals for each participant

Theme for the Day: Identity and Journey


Each day we are together we will be following a particular theme, which the facilitator will introduce to you. Today’s theme looks at our personal identity and looks at the journey we have covered in our lives so far. The journey idea is an overarching theme you will hear much about as the workshop progresses.

Ask participants to take a look at their programme for the week where daily themes are identified.

Aims of the process and background to the workshop

As part of the program called “One Body”, National Christian Councils/Councils of Churches in Southern African countries will be conducting dialogue workshops in their member churches on “The role of the churches in the context of violence on






marginalized groups such as LGBTI people". This process takes place alongside the many other ways in which LGBTI people and religious leaders have already begun to engage in dialogue, but it offers the National Christian Councils as a specific entry point, and in some cases will reach denominations which have not otherwise begun to engage. In many of these workshops there will be a need and a readiness among the church leaders to meet LGBTI people of faith who can enter into dialogue with them. For many of both the church leaders and the LGBTI persons of faith, this is going to be the first time they meet and together talk about these issues.

In order for these dialogues to be constructive and in the long run for the betterment of the lives of LGBTI persons in the country, a thorough, deep and personal preparation is needed. It is our hope that this workshop material which we have developed together can be of use not only in this process with the National Christian Councils but more broadly, in other processes of dialogue between religious leaders and LGBTI people. The Global Interfaith Network (GIN) is organizing the participation of LGBTI people of faith, from its members, to take part in these dialogues and in the preparation for them, and you have been invited to participate as one of them.

Ideally, a representative from FRI, GIN or FOCCISA will be in the workshop. Invite them to share a short introductory comment about the Christian Councils dialogue process, "One Body" and the One Body supplement; and to talk about how and why violence and marginalisation are strategic entry-points.

Format and Approach for the week



The week has been designed as a retreat for personal and spiritual renewal in preparation for participating in dialogue with church leaders. Sit back, relax into it and enjoy. There will be times of stillness and reflection on your own journey.

In this time, we will enter into an experience of being in community together and we will be the ONE BODY that is described in Corinthians. We will join together in prayer and song and scripture based on a series of daily themes. Today we will be focusing on our own identity and journey.

We will practice community, connection, belonging.

Very practically, there will be:

- *A **devotional opening and closing** each day. This will be about 20 minutes and will be led by different participant groups which we will set up today.*
- *A **private contemplation** of half an hour. You will be given scriptures to read and questions to reflect on – this will take place in and around the venue.*
- ***Morning reflections** on the previous day and what has emerged for you from the private contemplation.*
- *There will be **an altar** on this table at the front, where you are welcome to add things during the week.*
- *At the end of the day there will be time for **private consolidation** of what has emerged throughout the day. Reflections from this can be captured in your journal.*

Distribute journals and invite participants to use these in their private reflection throughout the week. They should feel free to make notes, drawings, record scriptures etc.



- On the last day, each person will be invited to give a very **short presentation** on what it means for them to be ready to participate in dialogue.
- **Personal Support:** We would like to set up a supportive community for the next few days. During the workshop, we might touch on quite personal or sensitive issues and some of these may have been the source of hurt and pain for you. Sometimes these feelings may resurface for you, making it difficult to concentrate and continue with the workshop.

Think of someone in the room you might use as a **talking partner** who you can chat to during breaks or after the workshop. This should be someone whom you feel comfortable with, or respect.

Counsellors: In addition, there may be some trained counsellors in the room. Ask them to raise their hands and ask if you could offer their services to the group. The facilitators also provide counselling or other support to anyone who needs it. They can offer referral advice to participants who might need on-going or in-depth counselling.

Secret Guardian Angels



METHOD

1. Ask participants to write their name on a yellow post-it note and fold it in four.
2. Place the names in a box (or hat or basket) and then ask participants to each draw a name. If someone draws their own name, put it back into the box and ask the person to draw another name.
3. Participants should keep the name they drew a secret as they are going to be a Secret Guardian Angel to this person throughout the workshop – emotionally supporting and encouraging the person daily. This could be in the form of tiny gifts like chocolate, a message via other participants, anonymous notes.
4. Guardian Angels can use the box (or hat or basket) as a “post box”. Facilitators should check the post-box often and “deliver” post to participants throughout the workshop.
5. Everyone’s Guardian Angel will be revealed at the end of the workshop.

Hopes for the Week

Ask the group to share what their hopes are for the week: their vision or desire for what the week might achieve for them, personally – as individuals – or collectively.

This week we have come together to personally and spiritually prepare ourselves for participation in dialogue.

It would be good to hear from each of us what HOPE we have for the week that lies ahead. What is this week about for you? What are you looking forward to?



LEADING A VISUALISATION

Visualisation is a creative process for participants. Please note it is *not* hypnosis! As the facilitator, it is important that you set the right mood and tone for the activity – this should be quiet and thoughtful. Your voice should drop down a few notes, and become quiet, strong and regular (think about the tick of an old grandfather clock). The pace should be slow and firm and repetitive. If you use music in the background, the piece you choose to play is critical – instrumental is best, but quiet songs with lyrics can also work well. If you choose the wrong piece of music, it will work against the relaxation process and will be distracting.

The first phase is one of *relaxation* – encouraging the group to relax all parts of the body, to focus on the “here and now”, to centre their thoughts by becoming aware of their breathing. You assist them to become aware of the sounds around them (the traffic, aircon, etc.) and then to release them. Thereafter, the “story” you lead them through is very open-ended, allowing them the space and time to go back to their past and history. Good visualisations try to use all five senses (sight, sound, smells, taste, touch) to help people trigger strong memories. You encourage them to use their imaginations to explore past (or present) experiences.

Some participants can have a very powerful experience and others are not moved by it at all. Don’t worry about this and don’t put pressure on participants to say they found it powerful – it is what it is! Hopefully other activities on the workshop will have challenged and stretched them.

For many participants, this is their first experience of visualisation.

D. Identity and Faith (50 minutes)

Aims

1. To establish a common understanding of what it means to be “people of faith”?
2. To start the conversation about the integration of our faith and our identity.

METHOD

1. In pairs, discuss the following questions:
 - a. *We come into the room as “people of faith”. What does that mean?*
 - b. *How are we challenged in life to live our sexual orientation/gender identity and our faith?*
2. In plenary, continue the discussion and make the link to the challenges that LGBTI people of faith have because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, which is just one part of their identity.

E. Visualization (35 minutes)

Aims

1. To use visualization as an evocative stimulus for deeper memories of the journeys participants have travelled in their lives so far in terms of their identity and their spirituality.

METHOD

1. **NOTE TO FACILITATORS:** In preparation for leading the visualisation, read the technical note above (for yourself; not out loud to the group): “*Leading a Visualisation*”.
2. Invite participants to find a comfortable place in the room where they have space to be on their own. Ask them to close their eyes and to breathe deeply. If they are not comfortable closing their eyes, they should just drop their gaze. Help them to relax by naming various parts of the body – from the bottom of their feet and the tips of their toes to the top of their heads. Ask them to tighten and relax these as you scan through the body. You may want to play relaxing music.
3. Take about 5-8 minutes to read the visualisation out slowly, giving participants plenty of time to think about each question:

As you close your eyes and are aware of your breath coming into your body and leaving it again, coming in through your nose out through your mouth... think of the journey you have travelled in life to reach this point in time...

I wonder what kind of a journey it has been and what kind of road you have travelled ...? I wonder what the surface of that road has been like for you as you walked along...

How has the weather been on that road? Can you smell it and feel it? Over time the weather has probably changed...

See yourself as you walk on that road. See the child...the teenager...the adult... that you have become. See yourself growing up...growing taller and older and maturing into who you are now...

How are you walking on that road? Are you carrying anything with you? How are you in your heart as you walk that road?

Perhaps there are people on the road alongside you? Sometimes you journey together for a while...sometimes you are alone. Who walks that road with you? What other pilgrims tread the same track?

Think about who you are as a person...the different parts that make up the whole human being – your mind, body and soul... Think about your sexual orientation or gender identity and where that fits into who you are.

Are there important relationships in your life? How easy does this sit with who you are?

Think about your relationship with God over all this time...and where God is on that journey with you...

Imagine that you have reached a high point on the journey where you can look back to where you came from with clarity. Picture the landscape that lies around you on the road...

Are there any obstacles that lie on the road as you walk...how have you managed to find your way around or under or over these...? From where have you drawn your strength?

Along the way there have been times when burdens have been light, the road has been easy. What has given you sustenance and joy?

Think for a moment about where you stand now. Think about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity and how these two parts of yourself live together in your life on the journey...how easily do they sit together for you? How comfortable are you in yourself as you navigate this territory? What is the map that guides you when you look ahead?

Pause for a moment and reflect.

And where are you now on this journey?



HOLDING SPACE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Many will manage to convey their stories and contain or hold their emotions, but there are always some people in every group whose emotions spill over into tears. This is perfectly okay. It is important as facilitator that we do not try to over-comfort or soothe the person, or try to interpret what the tears might mean. Give people the time and space to express themselves or withdraw and recover. Don't pressure them to speak until they seem ready. Discourage any others in the group who might over comfort beyond a gentle gesture or the offer of a tissue.

4. Hold the moment for a while and then bring participants back into the room by noticing the sounds, becoming aware of their own breathing again and, when they are ready, to open their eyes.

It is best to continue quietly into the next exercise without debriefing.


F. My Journey: Focusing on SOGIE¹ and Spirituality (1 hour 40 minutes)

Aims

1. To recall and record in some detail the story of their lives to date with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and spirituality.
2. To share this with others as a way to gain perspective, greater healing and to find common ground in the group.

Materials and Equipment

1. A4 paper
2. Art materials – crayons, pastels, markers

METHOD


We are all on a journey in life. That journey tells the story of each of our lives. And no one's story is the same as someone else's. Each story is different. But, for each of us, there are times when the road we travel is straight and smooth and feels easy, and other times when it is steep and winding, when we cannot see what is coming towards us; it feels as if we are travelling less easily. Along that journey, as we travel, we encounter light, bright moments – experiences, opportunities, people – who strengthen and encourage us. At other times, we hit patches of darkness, where we don't see so clearly; we can feel unsure or unclear for a while, or overwhelmed, even sad or scared. Sometimes it feels as if we are travelling alone; at other times we are aware that others walk alongside us for a while. We don't stay in one place on that road forever. And the journey shapes us: the easy places and the rough places. They are all part of our unique stories, one way to think about and talk about our identity. This exercise enables us to look back at our lives and plot the journey we have experienced.

1. Using provided art materials, participants should spend half an hour reflecting on their own life journey with regards to their **sexual orientation, gender identity and spirituality**. They can capture this on paper through images and metaphors that speak to them and their experience.

The following **GUIDING QUESTIONS** may be helpful to share on flipchart. Explain that they don't have to answer all of these questions; they are there to provide inspiration.

Who am I?

What have I experienced on my journey so far?

Who is on the road with me?

¹ Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

What does this moment in time represent for me? How is being here, today, at this workshop, a part of my journey?

2. Invite participants to share their stories in triads (groups of 3).. Then invite one or two to share in plenary if they would like to.
3. Make a note of emerging themes, cross overs, parallel or similar stories. Comment on and summarize for the group what some of the “common ground” is. Note that our personal journeys intersect and depart from one another continuously.

G. Leading Devotional Openings and Closings (40 minutes)

METHOD

1. Divide participants into 7 groups or pairs who will cover the spiritual opening and closing of each day. Each group will decide on what rituals could be included that will be of encouragement and provide appropriate support to the group based on the daily theme, which can be identified on the programme for the week. It could be useful to include:
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Scripture reading (as provided)
 - c. Worship and song
 - d. Use of stones, water, candles as symbols of hope and life.
 - e. A meditative time
2. Note that even within our commonality as LGBTI people of faith, there is a great diversity of faith expression and church denomination among the group. We would need to respect and understand this. What is comfortable for some, may not be for others.
3. Allocate a session to each group (Tuesday – Friday). Give the groups half an hour to plan their session. They should plan for the devotions to last no longer than 20 minutes.
4. Note that the initial planning will take place now, but that they most likely will need to be flexible enough to make adaptations as the week progresses and in response to new themes or emerging thoughts and ideas.
5. Confirm the starting time tomorrow morning: 8.30am

H. Private Application/Consolidation (20 minutes)



At the end of each day, we take some time on our own – each one for ourselves, with our journals – to reflect. To consolidate. To integrate the work of each day so we can construct for ourselves the significant meaning of the day, and extract our personal learning about how to be prepared to engage in dialogue.

As you do that this afternoon, you might find it helpful to consider some Guiding Questions:

1. *What has been most significant for me, on a personal level, today? What has spoken to me most powerfully as an LGBTI person of faith?*
2. *What do I take away from today about my own journey to date in terms of my spirituality, my sexual orientation and/or my gender identity?*

3. *How is the work of today preparing me to participate in dialogue with religious leaders? Are there any important lessons, attitudes, principles, practices or skills I need to apply?*
4. *What work do I need to do within myself to develop those capabilities and competencies?*

I. Devotional/Ritual Closing (40 minutes)

METHOD

1. During tea break it is important to have set up 5 stations around the room with the following items:
 - a. A selection of smooth stones AND a few markers (enough for each person).
 - b. A big bowl of water and a towel.
 - c. Candles – a large lit candle and small unlit tea-light candles (enough for each person)
 - d. A selection (rainbow) of coloured ribbons (enough for each person).
 - e. A quiet area that can act as an altar at the front and includes a few symbols of faith – a cross, a Bible, a rosary, a picture etc. This altar will stay throughout the week.
2. Each table should have on it the corresponding page (see below) that explains to participants what to do at the station. Group four or five chairs around the station, so that participants who would like to spend extra time at any station are encouraged to do so. Allow participants back into the room once the stations are ready.
3. This ritual allows participants some time and space to symbolically acknowledge the journey we have all been on to reach this place. An atmosphere should be created of quiet, slow reflection. Gentle background music or a recording of natural sounds can enhance the experience.

Explain to the Group:

In this closing, we want to honour what has come before on the many journeys that are represented here in the room. We want to remember how far we have travelled on the road, the storms we have weathered, the floods we have survived and the moments of gentle rain and warm sunshine when we have been renewed. There are so many memories we have – of people, and places and things that have happened to us, both good and bad - that we want to honour.

There are also experiences we want to heal from – the pain, the hurt, perhaps the shame. We want to remember the many losses we are mourning. Some of these might be people, parts of ourselves or our history, our hopes and dreams.

And still we have hope for a future, for what lies ahead. And we have things big and small to celebrate.

We will be moving into a quiet ritual to reflect on the journey we have travelled so far. There are 5 stations around the room with symbols representing our good and bad memories, healing, hope and celebration, and a space throughout for prayerful reflection

