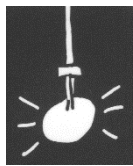


# Seekers Forum How-To Guide



**RIGHT  
HAND  
RESOURCES**

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Mar. 2017

## Summary

The Seekers Forum provides a forum for connection that combines in-person and online community. It establishes a safe place for newcomers to share their stories which is essential to connection and belonging. It is not a commitment to membership or confirmation; it is simply an exploration in relationship. Participants are personally invited to join and must be able to attend the two in-person gatherings. Events are scheduled for Saturdays instead of Sundays.

The Forum consists of no more than 10 people: clergy, newcomer leader, two members and six newcomers. The two members could be vestry which is a great way for vestry to get a pulse on newcomer needs. They meet in person to kick off the group, then ponder questions in a secret Facebook group for four to five weeks, then gather for a celebration dinner which includes children and family. Each Forum is numbered, similar to the youth retreat, Happening.

A member of clergy is present but the newcomer minister leads the in-person gatherings and moderates the Facebook page so that clergy is free to be a participant. This dynamic makes the clergy more accessible to the newcomers.

It is important that the meet/greet gathering occur in a home or “lounge” setting versus a classroom setting to create a relaxed atmosphere for sharing. Serve light snacks and arrange furniture in a comfortable circle. For fun, bring a selfie stick so that you can take a picture at the end of the day to post to the FB page. Use the agenda provided in this guide.

The Facebook page is a “secret” page which means that no one can find the group without being invited. The posts will show up in a participant’s regular FB page for convenience, but none of their friends outside the Forum can see these posts. The newcomer leader must be FB friends with all participants in order to invite them to the Forum page. This includes clergy.

Post questions on agreed upon days and don’t wait for all to weigh in before answering or you can lose momentum. The newcomer leader is the only one to post questions but the participants are encouraged to comment on posts and may submit questions to the moderator for posting. All input is on the page – no private messaging. Prayer requests encouraged.

The Celebration Dinner is at the home of clergy or newcomer leader and is designed to start early (say 5 pm) and last about two hours. This is a celebration of the relationships that have been built and not a typical church potluck. The participants do not contribute to the meal; this is about serving them. You may want to have this catered (simply) or cover the costs for someone gifted in hospitality/cooking from the congregation to provide the meal. The meal should express the value we place on newcomers, so no paper plates! Accommodate any dietary restrictions and include some kid-friendly food as well. Enjoy the meal, then play an interactive game such as Heads Up (app available for iPhone and Android). The evening concludes with asking for feedback from the participants. Ask what they got out of the Forum, what they liked about it, what they would change. How were the questions? How was the length of the experience? Write this feedback down and integrate to the next Forum.

You may want to plan Forum reunions periodically and create a bridge to other connection such as confirmation retreats, ministry, or broader fellowship groups.

Go with God as you watch the miracles unfold!

## Agenda for Meet & Greet

**Meet/Greet** at home of clergy or other relaxed setting (no classrooms). Held on a Saturday from 2 to 4 pm. Serve light snacks and arrange furniture in a comfortable circle. Have nametags ready for each person.

We move through this agenda with the participants leading each *numbered* item. See page 4 for info.

**1 The Seekers Prayer** Most holy God, the creator of all, send your Holy Spirit to inspire us. Walk with us on our journey to seek what you would have us find. Grant us courage to explore while trusting that your guidance is perfect and that your love is everlasting. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **2 Introductions:**

- name
- where were you born?
- who invited you to church (not to St. Mary's but just church)? If you ever fell away from the church, who invited you back?

### **3 Purpose of Seekers Forum**

The Seekers Forum is a safe place to build relationships with individuals who are connected to St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Our group is guided by loving acceptance and holy curiosity as we ponder questions and share our stories.

**4 Holy Curiosity** encourages us to inquire in a respectful and welcoming way, trying to learn about the other person's thoughts, values, priorities, and feelings. This is in contrast to an analytical approach used to solve problems at work, home or congregation or other group setting.

**Group Charter** Leader passes to group and each person reads aloud one item on the charter (pg 9)

### **5 What brought you to St. Mary's? Why have you stayed?**

**6 Facebook questions** will be posted on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. You can pass on any question but the more you participate, the more you will get out of this experience. You may comment on others' answers. Please avoid private messaging. If you have a question you would like asked, email to [newcomer leader] for posting to the FB page.

**Question Round** – pick one out of bag or answer previous question (see pages 6-8). I printed these and put in sealed envelopes in a cloth bag for fun and this keeps folks from thinking about their answer when they need to listen to others.

**7 Closing Prayer** O God, the source of eternal light: Shed forth your unending day upon us who watch for you, that our lips may praise you, our lives may bless you, and our worship tomorrow give you glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reminder – Celebration dinner on [date] which includes spouses and children of participants.**

## Handouts for Interactive Agenda

Print these, put them in numbered envelopes, and give to a few of the participants. When it is time for that number on the agenda, the participant opens and reads what's on the paper to the group. This keeps the facilitator from doing all the talking.

1. **The Seekers Prayer** Most holy God, the creator of all, send your Holy Spirit to inspire us. Walk with us on our journey to seek what you would have us find. Grant us courage to explore while trusting that your guidance is perfect and that your love is everlasting. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
  
2. **Please introduce yourself:**
  - a. your name
  - b. where were you born?
  - c. who invited you to church? If you fell away, who invited you back?
  
3. **Purpose of Seekers Forum**

The Seekers Forum is a safe place to build relationships with individuals who are connected to St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Our group is guided by loving acceptance and holy curiosity as we ponder questions and share our stories.
  
4. **Holy Curiosity** encourages us to inquire in a respectful and welcoming way, trying to learn about the other person's thoughts, values, priorities, and feelings. This is in contrast to an analytical approach used to solve problems at work, home or congregation or other group setting.
  
5. What brought you to St. Mary's? Why did you stay?
  
6. **Facebook questions** will be posted on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. You can pass on any question but the more you participate, the more you will get out of this experience. You may comment on others' answers. Please avoid private messaging. If you have a question you would like asked, email to [newcomer leader] for posting to the FB page.
  
7. **Closing Prayer** God, the source of eternal light: Shed forth your unending day upon us who watch for you, that our lips may praise you, our lives may bless you, and our worship tomorrow give you glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Facebook Questions

**I attach a graphic or photo that illustrates the question. Save videos for weekends; they are hard to listen to during the work day. Videos should be no more than three minutes. These are just suggestions; get creative with this journey.**

1. How did you meet your best friend?
2. As you look back, what life lesson do you think gave you the most wisdom?
3. Do you remember what you thought you'd be "when you grew up?" How does that differ or line up with your life now?
4. What's on your Bucket List?
5. Listen to the Aloe Blacc song "Wake Me Up" or other song; do any of these lyrics reflect your faith story or spiritual bio? How so? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_o6axAseak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_o6axAseak)
6. Post a photo of where you saw God today.
7. Any prayer requests?
8. Your personal mantra or philosophy in 10 words or less.
9. Were you ever tempted to pray with someone but felt awkward or inappropriate?
10. What do you think about this quote: "When God wants to give you a gift, he wraps it up in a problem?"
11. Read the poster about Jesus Was a Radical – agree / disagree?  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/28/jesus-radical-nonviolent\\_n\\_4512335.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/28/jesus-radical-nonviolent_n_4512335.html)
12. Watch the What is Privilege video/exercise. Do you think it would be useful at our church?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ>
13. Prayer book scavenger hunt – what is the answer to this question (per the BCP)? Be the first to post.  
Hint – there is an online BCP. <http://www.bcponline.org/>
14. Comments/Discussion on sermons
15. Current events and discussions
16. Post a picture of you doing what gives you joy or what gives you joy
17. LOGOS Resources on EDOT website – Becca Stevens video; what surprises you? This video is eight minutes which may be a bit long.
18. "We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered." — Martin Luther King Jr. Thoughts?
19. Upworthy video about showers for the homeless <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AekgQuQ8uTM>
20. When was the last time you did something for the first time?
21. If you could ask God one question what would it be?
22. In the next three days, do a random act of kindness and share with us here. (photo optional)
23. Post a photo of religious art and ask for impressions. There are some thought provoking (some controversial) religious pieces to ponder. Click below for an example.  
<http://www.npr.org/2014/04/13/302019921/statue-of-a-homeless-jesus-startles-a-wealthy-community>
24. You may also use questions from such discussion cards as Table Topics, etc.
25. <http://www.supersoul.tv/supersoul-sunday/brene-brown-regret-is-a-fair-but-tough-teacher> Topic: regret
26. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imXP0VW4KMU> Redeemed video from St. Thomas the Apostle church in Overland Park, Kansas. Has your church community brought about change in you?
27. What is a compliment you received that you treasure?
28. Have you ever received an answer to prayer?
29. [www.theworkofthepeople.com](http://www.theworkofthepeople.com) has great videos to use about spiritual journey.
30. What is your personal theme song?
31. <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2016/8/29/1564922/-Video-presenting-people-with-their-DNA-results-forces-us-to-confront-our-biases-against-others>

Get to Know You Questions for Kick Off Meet/Greet

Print out, cut up and put in sealed envelopes. I put them in a fabric bag and participants could either answer the question that had just been asked or pick one out of the bag.

**What is something you own that is of sentimental value?**

**What gives you joy?**

**Complete the statement: Something I collect is.....**

**What has been the biggest change in your life during the past year?**

**When you meet people for the first time, what do you usually want to know about them right away?**

**If you had to give up TV for one year, what would do with the extra time?**

**What time of the year do you anticipate most? Why?**

**What was your best vacation ever?**

**Who or what has contributed most to your value system?**

**If you went on a volunteer vacation, who would you most like to help?**

**Where do you go when you feel the need to “get away?”**

**If you could do one thing specific for the environment, what would it be?**

**Which part of a typical day do you look forward to the most?**

**How much would you have to be paid to never use a cell phone again?**

**What makes you feel proud?**

**What sounds do you most like to hear when you  
wake up in the morning?**

**When you were a child, what was your most prized  
possession?**

**What was the last amazing meal you shared with  
others?**



# Seekers Forum #XX

## Group Charter

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Our group is a private gathering for Forum members

We promise to keep what is said in the Forum, in the Forum

We promise to listen with Holy Curiosity and respect

We promise to avoid profanity and slang that may be hurtful

We agree to share responses on our page - no private messaging

We allow anyone to take a “pass” on a specific topic or question

We recognize that the Forum doesn't replace worship

We will not promote any business ventures through the Forum

We will endeavor to encourage each other as we journey

[date]