

ArchOmaha Unite Listening Session Template

The objective of a Listening Session is give everyone in a large crowd a chance to speak and be heard without having everyone go to the microphone. Normally, in a group of a hundred or so, a listening session does not need to go beyond an hour and a half.

Inviting

The Chancery can provide you with a list of those who registered for the event. You can either send them a personal invite or put a general invitation in the bulletin or Mass announcements.

Gathering

As people begin to arrive, assume they don't know everyone. Be sure to use name tags and encourage them to sit with someone they don't know. Have the handout of questions already placed at their seats. It seems to work better when tables are set up so that attendees have a place to write as well as have a conversation. As a gesture of hospitality, it may be good to have some light snacks and drinks available.

Reflection

After the opening prayer, explain the format and the reason for the listening session, i.e. there will be time for small and large group sharing in order for our organization to prayerfully discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us. Right now though, invite them to prayerfully reflect on the questions being asked and write these on the handouts. The answers will be collected at the end of the session. They may or may not want to put their names on the paper.

Table Conversation

After a period of 10-20 minutes of quiet reflection (walk around the room to gauge progress), invite the tables to enter into a discussion about each question and their answers. This step could take between 25 and 30 minutes. Again, walk around the room and evaluate their progress.

Large Group Sharing

While it might be nice to hear from everyone, not everyone has all day. The best way to get a sense of the conversations around the room is for the tables to designate a spokesperson for each question. That person will share the thoughts of the table with the entire group. The same person could speak for all the questions.

Go through each question one by one. For example, all spokespersons for question 1 would line up and share the highlights from the table. When they're finished, question 2 spokespersons

would line up and share. Preferable, depending on the size of the room, a microphone would be used.

Be sure to designate someone from your staff, team, or council to take notes during this part of the session. These will be redacted with the comments on the handouts that will be collected.

Questions

Have the questions, which are below, already printed out on a piece of paper with space given for people to write their answers. Below are suggested questions. Feel free to add, change or subtract.

- 1. Which part of ArchOmaha Unite moved your heart the most and what in particular do you think made it so moving?*
- 2. When you pray for the Church, what do you find yourself routinely asking for?*
- 3. What part of the Pastoral Vision – One Church: Encountering Jesus, Equipping Disciples, and Living Mercy – gets you most excited and how could you see it more embodied in our parish?*
- 4. If our parish could do anything and not fail, what would we hope to accomplish?*

Final Thoughts

As the leader, you don't need summarize what you heard here at the end. Perhaps just share some thoughts about hopes you have in a more general way. Be sure to say what the next steps are: the parish council, leadership team, or staff, etc will be prayerfully reflecting on what was heard and action steps will be taken to move forward on one or two items. Ask that they leave their handouts at the table.