

2014 Open Space Conversations

On Saturday afternoon we are going to try something new. A variety of topics for conversation will be offered. Each conversation will be hosted by a leader who has some interest or experience with the topic. The host's role will be to clarify the topic, share from their own experience, and invite others into the conversation. Even though not every conversation will have an overt link to our assembly's focus, those interested in leading a conversation should keep this year's theme in mind: "The gospel has been bearing fruit and growing through out the whole world -- just as it has been doing among you." (Colossians 1:6)

At the beginning of the Open Space Conversation session the whole assembly will meet to hear 60 second descriptions from each respective conversation host clarifying "what they'd like to dialogue about." Once all the hosts have offered their descriptions, people will choose which conversation they'd like to attend. Some conversations may have a bunch of interested people, others possibly none. This shouldn't be seen as insulting or personal instead; it should be seen as simply what this particular gathering is interested in discussing. If it turns out that you pitched a conversation to which no one comes, join another and enjoy the dialogue from another perspective.

We are adapting this Open Space Conversation process from that used by the Illinois Mennonite Conference. It's an approach that in their experience is characterized by openness, commitment to listening, healthy room for dialogue and the exchange of experiences in an informal yet inspiring atmosphere.

On average, the conversations last about an hour. If you need more time you can arrange to continue the conversation over dinner. Each conversation should have a recorder (preferably someone who has a laptop) who can deliver a written document back to PNMC following the discussion. Some reports will simply describe what the presenter shared. Others may offer a new vision out of the dialogue!

If the Spirit is nudging you to bring an idea for discussion, you will be given the opportunity to offer your "pitch" and see who else might want to join you for the discussion you're suggesting. Please let Katherine Pitts or Jeryl Hollinger know if you are have a conversation you'd like to host.