



Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning | Forum pour le leadership et l'apprentissage interculturels

# A CANADA-WIDE EVENT INTERCULTURALITY: AN INVITATION TO CONVERSATION AND DIALOGUE

2022  
Theology and Research Group  
The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning  
The Canadian Council of Churches  
[www.InterculturalLeadership.ca](http://www.InterculturalLeadership.ca)

*In 2022, the Theology and Research group of The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning invited small groups in contexts across Canada to read the document "Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue." Local groups were invited to submit questions that emerged from reading the document together in their contexts. These questions provided a framework for a Canada-wide event in which participants shared stories of how these questions are being engaged in their contexts.*

# Interculturality: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue

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*This activity has been framed by The Research and Theology group of the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning, which invites, fosters, and amplifies the many people working toward theologies of interculturality, connects faith based intercultural ministry to the learning of other disciplines, and initiates and brings together research on intercultural ministry in the churches.*

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## Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles

### **Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue**

The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL):  
A Reference Group of The Canadian Council of Churches (April 2021)

#### **The FILL Theology and Research Working Group**

*This group offers this living document as a framework and guiding principles as it attempts to be open to and live out interculturality in our various church communities. This group recognizes that interculturality is a complex and painstaking process of mutual learning and of undoing inherited structures that privilege a small segment of society over others. As a living document, this will change over time as we become more sensitive to hearing God's calling to become a prophetic community. This group offers this document as an invitation to conversation and dialogue.*

The FILL Theology and Research Working Group has adopted a framework and guiding principles:

- 1) the celebration and welcoming of the diverse voices of faith communities to be part of the conversation, with the recognition that each of us speak from **different ethnocultural vantage points**;

*Diverse here denotes inclusion of all varying expressions of the human experience, including but not limited to: ethno-racial, cultural, religious traditions, age, gender, sexual orientation and identity, class, ableness, citizenship, education, geographic location...*

- 2) and to acknowledge that each of us encounters each other with our own unique experiences, ways of knowing, and **diverse spiritual and theological traditions**.

- 3) We intend to **interrogate the available language** and to **develop and create new language** to speak about intercultural exchanges.

*Intercultural exchanges are the multilevel dynamics by which members of different ethnocultural communities interact with each other and draw from their own sources of knowledge and wisdom to make sense of life, interact with each other, the environment, and make sense of the divine. Cultural traditions are not understood here as finished products and uniform. They are conceived as porous and dynamic and in a constant process of fluctuation or change.*

As part of our objective, we are committed to reflect on the meaning of **interculturality**. We do this by:

- i) naming and challenging the **duality between theory and practice in Western Euro-centric contexts**, and **validating and affirming the holistic nature of life**;

*We do not understand interculturality monolithically, as if there is a single meaning to interculturality. Different communities understand the term differently.*

*Duality: In Western Euro-Centric contexts the tendency is to separate all experiences of life into disconnected pieces without necessarily bringing all the pieces together at the end, for example: we think; we feel; we do; we intuit, are all separate. Another example is we separate the private and the public. Life is reduced to all of its parts, but the linkages are not made explicit.*

*Holistic nature of life: Being in touch with all our relationships, with each other, with our own bodies, with all of nature. All of it is not reducible to concepts or categories but is encompassed in everyday life. This is the Indigenous concept of “All my relations”*

- ii) reclaiming and learning from the lived-experiences of ethnocultural communities on the ground as sources of theological material;

*Intercultural engagement imposes an ethical imperative so that no one group can claim to have any kind of privileges over other communities. It entails an action of mutual welcoming of all parties recognizing that all stand on equal ground.*

- iii) **challenging Western Eurocentric and Euro-Canadian-centred forms of knowledge and ways of encountering the Divine** which discount other forms of learning, along with other forms of knowledge, of doing theology, and other forms of living life;

*In light with the holistic nature of life, intercultural engagement requires that dominant communities abandon denial, distraction, or deflection of historical grievances. Instead, engage in an intentional unlearning of the colonising mentality and learning decolonising ways of right relationships.*

- iv) **celebrating and valuing of Indigenous cultural traditions** and knowledges, as well as the **celebrating and valuing of the many other ethnocultural, epistemological and faith traditions** that call Canada home.

*Interculturality requires that cultural diversity becomes a characteristic of the social context. It also requires that different communities become mutually receptive of each other, and the different ways they view life, understand God, and interact with each other in ways that are dignifying, just, and life-giving.*



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## Local Conversations

In 2021 The Theology and Research group of The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) created the document “Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue.”

There is a multiplicity of the use and meanings of terms such as Intercultural, Interculturalism, and Interculturality. Theology and Research group of FILL recognized a need to engage in conversations to understand what is meant by “interculturality.” These understandings are and will be different in different contexts.

More than an agreement on a “term” or “definition,” interculturality is a process. This living document is offered as a framework and guiding principles as communities attempt to be open to and live out interculturality in our various church communities. This group recognizes that interculturality is a complex and painstaking process of mutual learning and of undoing inherited structures that privilege a small segment of society over others. As a living document, it will change over time as we become more sensitive to hearing God's calling to become a prophetic community. This document was offered as an invitation to conversation and dialogue.

In the fall of 2022, The Theology and Research group of The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) extended an invitation for local convenors to host conversations. These local convenors each hosted a 2-hour ecumenical small group conversation. In addition, at its November 2022 meeting the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) engaged the same process forming ecumenical groups of its member church representatives. Each group was invited to:

- 1. Read the document “Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue.”**
- 2. As you read the document name: “what questions emerge from reading this document in our contexts?” Listen carefully to each other’s questions.**
- 3. Identify three key questions to be submitted to FILL for the Cross-Canada conversation.**

## The Questions

Local conversations identified and submitted the following questions:

### Edmonton:

- The pervasiveness of Euro-centricity in every part of the life of the church is massive. How do you do the work of dismantling that while still having to be part of the structures and ways of thinking of that very system?
- These principles and guidelines are very good. What are some more specific ways that local church congregations and leaders on the ground could begin to embody them in ways that have a tangible impact?
- Are there other kinds of biases and disparities at play beyond the ethno-cultural that need to be acknowledged as relevant to the pursuit of ecclesial interculturality?

### Quebec:

- How can leadership be equipped with the skills of change management, to guide the conversation as or when it meets resistance to the narratives (new for some) that the document raises.
- Is there a missing piece....beyond the invitation to listen and learn from each other, and calls to action, ...this is a forming thought, hard to grasp what is being asked here...the suggestion is maybe around the on-going process of acknowledging the deep spirit calling us to see the Divine in everything, and that every day Jesus called the faithful to challenge norms and be uncomfortable with the truths spoken to power. Making interculturality essential to our lives, as our faith (in all its forms) is.

### Toronto

- Who is the primary audience for this document? Who is going to work with it, read it, use it?
- The topic of interculturality is a difficult conversation: the language of the document makes us wonder, how do we ensure we use the language that is necessary while at the same time ensure we use language that is gentle enough that people are not offended, or at least not so offended that they cannot engage in healthy and constructive dialogue on this topic?
- What additional resources are available, or should be created, to help animate this document for people in communities of faith, e.g. study guides, videos, stories and other art forms?

## Canadian Council of Churches Governing Board Conversation (6 groups):

Table groups of 6-8 people read the document together. Each table group was asked to provide 3 questions that emerged as they read the document mindful of their contexts (such as CCC governing board, the church they represent, their local worshipping community)

- How do we keep learning new language/postures that honours and respects diverse people and cultures?
- What does it mean to honour the life of Christ in our perspective?
- How can we examine our own points of view & decolonize these thoughts, feelings & biases & motives?
- How can we prioritize finding commonality vs. what we have uncommon to reduce judgement of the “other”
- Given the asymmetrical diversity of our churches, what is the call to The Canadian Council of Churches?
- Is our goal to create awareness or change the reality?
- How can we delve into different epistemologies?
- How do we hear each other’s differences in these conversations?
- How do we distinguish between interculturality and inter-religious dialogue?
- How willing are we to pay the price of doing this work?
- Can the “creation of new language” slowly end up hurting the truth expressed in the Gospel?
- How do we connect in a way that encourages story telling and understanding?
- How does being together as “the body of Christ” empower us to live in unity and diversity?
- How do we incorporate/build understandings of diverse cultures that are based on aspects of identity that aren’t ethno-racial into intercultural work? Eg. Queer culture(s), deaf culture, cultures of class, disabilities cultures
- Does “celebration” equate into affirmation and approval of the different expressions?
- How do we find a respectful way to say “non-western” that eliminates negatives (eg. “non”)
- Is there truly room to hear different voices? How are we preparing to receive and engage those voices?



- How is the conversation affected by generational differences, especially younger people?
- Are we trading one word for another (race becomes culture) without actively addressing the problem?

## Canada-Wide Conversation November 28, 2022

The theology and research group of the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning reviewed the submitted questions. They discerned and grouped the questions into three themes. For each theme, they combined or summarized the questions to create two questions for conversation from each theme:

- **Culture**
  - **How do we create safe space for hearing different stories? How do we connect in a way that encourages storytelling and understanding?**
  - **How are the conversations on interculturality impacted by differences? Identify how those differences can work both as challenges and/or resources.**
  
- **Church and Theology**
  - **What theological insights can help the church work toward interculturality?**
  - **What are some more specific ways that local church congregations and leaders on the ground could begin to embody interculturality in ways that have a tangible impact?**
  
- **Theoretical and Language**
  - **How can we examine our biases as barriers to interculturality: re-evaluate colonizing attitudes, values and ways of being?**
  - **How do we experience and embrace different ways of knowing?**

November 28, 2022, the Theology and Research group of the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning convened a two-hour Canada-wide conversation on zoom. There were three small groups sessions on each theme. Participants self selected groups based on the question from each theme they wished to engage.

The groups were directed not answer the questions, but to share stories of how their communities and contexts are engaging or might engage these questions. Small groups were instructed to listen to each other's stories and identify themes to report back to the large group. For each round of conversations there was a report back from the small groups and a large group conversation.

The event concluded with a large group conversation around three questions:

- **What did you hear that you consider important key for conversations on interculturality?**
- **What new questions arise from your conversations?**
- **What are ideas you have for your local context to continue this conversation? What might we do and be as we engage interculturality as communities of faith?**



## Opening Remarks

Welcome on behalf of the Theology and Research Group of The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (or FILL)

The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning of the Canadian Council of Churches is an ecumenical Christian partnership through which Canadian Churches work toward intercultural leadership development and ministry learning in Canada and globally.

The Research and Theology group of FILL invites, fosters, and amplifies the many people working toward theologies of interculturality, connects faith based intercultural ministry to the learning of other disciplines, and initiates and brings together research on intercultural ministry in the churches.

Today we continue a conversation on Interculturality in Canadian contexts.

Small groups across Canada read the document “Interculturality Framework and Guiding Principles: An Invitation to Conversation and Dialogue” and sent us questions that emerged as they read it together. Those questions shaped today’s conversation.

The FILL Theology and Research group offers this living document as a framework and guiding principles as it attempts to be open to and live out interculturality in our various church communities. This group recognizes that interculturality is a complex and painstaking process of mutual learning and of undoing inherited structures that privilege a small segment of society over others. As a living document, this will change over time as we become more sensitive to hearing God's calling to become a prophetic community. This group offers this document as an invitation to conversation and dialogue.

There will be three “moments” of gathering around sets of questions. You will choose groups based on what questions you most want to engage.

In small groups, you will share “how this question is being engaged in my context.”

Each of the small group times (15 minutes) will be followed by a plenary in which we report back and identify themes we heard.

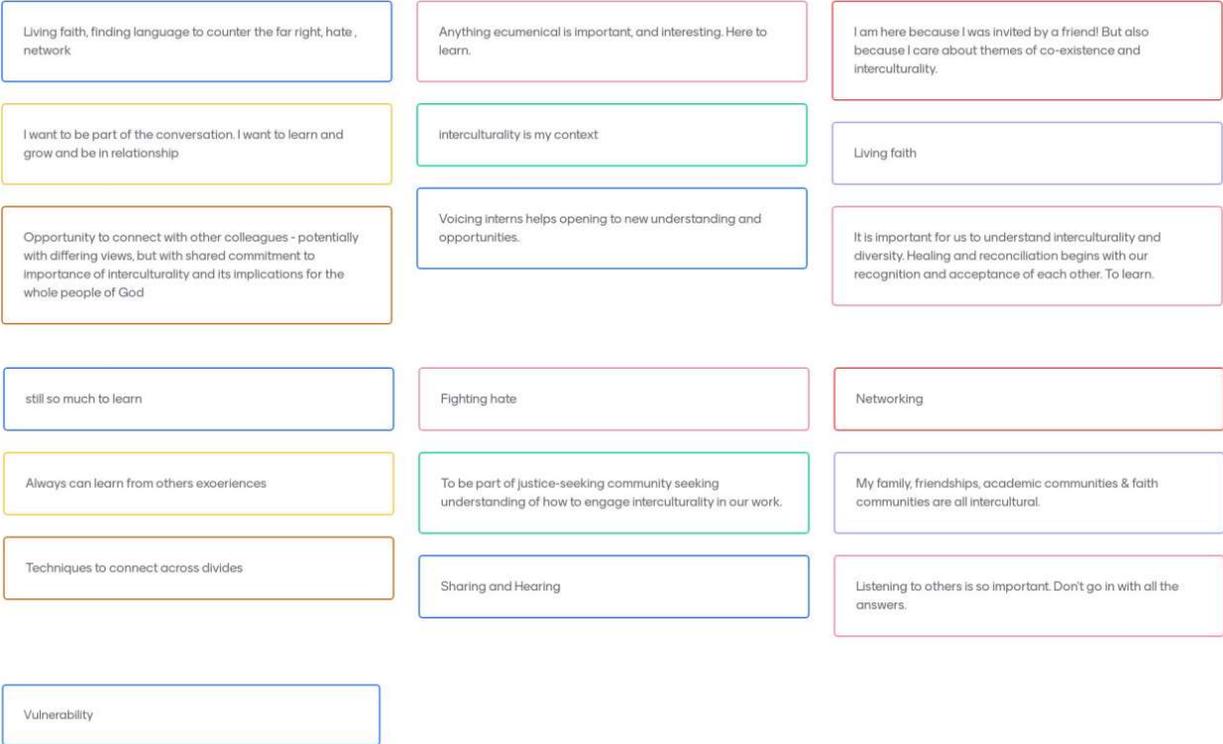
The last part of our time will be asking what new questions arise from our conversations. We will ask what we might do and be as we engage interculturality as communities of faith.

Important: In your groups you will not be asked to answer the questions, but to share stories of how your communities and contexts are engaging or might engage these questions.

Our pedagogical approach, or approach to learning, is rooted in community and context. We are all co-learners and co-teachers who all bring wisdom and experience. Our intention is to open an opportunity for participants to wrestle with, reflect on, and contextualize the incredible content offered. We have designed this conversation intentionally to create a space of dialogue. We think today’s reflections are an ongoing conversation that shapes people’s work and ministries.

This will not be an event to watch passively. Be prepared to engage in conversation.





## Conversation 1: "Culture"

There were a number of questions around what we identified as a theme of "culture." Two that we pulled out are on your screen. Think about which you would like to engage.

- **How do we create safe space for hearing different stories? How do we connect in a way that encourages storytelling and understanding?**
- **How are the conversations on interculturality impacted by differences? Identify how those differences can work both as challenges and/or resources.**

Important: In your groups you will not be asked to answer the questions, but to share stories of how your communities and contexts are engaging or might engage these questions.

Listen carefully to each others' stories. For a time of reporting back your conversation, we will not be asking you to retell those stories. We will ask you to identify themes you heard across the stories.

### Small group report back: "Culture"

## Conversation 1: What themes did you hear in the stories?

Mentimeter

Curiosity	finding people who are like you	seeking to be conneted
more than one truth!	who defines "safe space" and group norms	sometimes things need to be complicated
language barriers	Time needed to build relationships	the challenges of being an invisible minority leading to walls automatically being put up
- there is no one universal truth, but multiple truths. - listening and curiosity are skills we can develop and learn- our differences should be celebrated	Bias can make it difficult to find common ground or to see each other	in some contexts, these questions are not even recognized
being able to not only stand up but hold your point.	Fear of offending silenced people	Interculturality - not always acknowledged as an issue, so difficult to even begin to ask the questions...
A theology of relationships and remembering how Jesus turns the world upside down.	change starts in the leadership level	Respecting the self-sufficiency of all faith traditions to achieve salvation
the challenges of cross-cultural story-telling	what does it mean to decolonize the Church? How would a decolonial Church space look and feel like?	How do we recognize biases if they are unconscious in our bodies, minds and spirits?

## Small groups verbal report: “Culture”

### Transcription:

Some of the things that came out of our conversation, and one of the first ones was really around the act of listening and that presence that it takes to create a place where we can learn from each other. The other thing that came out is that there's more than one truth and being able to not only recognize that but make space for it and celebrate the fact that there's not just one truth. Another story that was shared was around the wisdom of the talking circle. That it can be challenging because we you know we live in a Western culture where sometimes it can be normal to talk over one another. But the talking circle kind of forces us in a good way to be present, and to give space for the whole truth to be told.

Part of the discussion was on the differences of understanding of interculturality, and that we need to work through this and understand that we come from different understandings of even that word in this work, and that the difference makes things more complicated. We kind of sometimes wish that people were more like us and had our own understanding, because it makes it a lot simpler. But recognizing that there is no universal truth or universal way of doing things, and how do we allow those differences to enter into the conversation, and to be present and respected.

I am just reflecting and mulling over the last comment made in the group, and I found very powerful that notion of listening and adapting a posture of curiosity. Those are skills that can be learned. I find that very, very hopeful because if we are all invested in and willing to learn then that itself could be transformative. But it is only if we're willing to learn and adapt that posture of learning where we can accept that transformation.

In many ways interculturality is a way to be. Gone are the days when we could look at another culture and create stereotypes. Now it's more like an invitation to ask out of curiosity, “Tell me more. I don't know your cultural tradition. I want to learn about your cultural tradition, so tell me more. So that that aspect of curiosity is such a phenomenal skill.

We spent a fair bit of time talking about assumptions that get made in terms of what is safe space, and who gets to define safe space and even about the use of the term and the rules of engagement, or group norms --- who gets to define those. It was a good, healthy part of our conversation, because I think sometimes, we make assumptions about what is safe. And then another question that was raised, was who are we creating the safe space for. I think that's worth a whole lot more conversation because we love to use some phrases sometimes, but maybe really haven't unpacked them. What does it actually mean? And maybe it's something that needs to be spoken of more frequently than a thinking. I know what a safe space is but maybe it's not so much.

So, it coincides also with the kind of use of language, of interculturality, or a whole lot of other terms that are used. And we agree, or people assume, that we all use it, and with the same meaning. Sometimes actually, that's not the case. One rule of thumb of course, and that's important, is that for anything to be safe it cannot be defined by the dominant group.

## Conversation 2: “Church and Theology”

There were several questions around what we identified as a theme of “Church and theology.” Two that we pulled out are on your screen. Think about which you would like to engage.

- **What theological insights can help the church work toward interculturality?**
- **What are some more specific ways that local church congregations and leaders on the ground could begin to embody interculturality in ways that have a tangible impact?**

Important: In your groups you will not be asked to answer the questions, but to share stories of how your communities and contexts are engaging or might engage these questions.

Listen carefully to each others’ stories. For a time of reporting back your conversation, we will not be asking you to retell those stories. We will ask you to identify themes you heard across the stories.

### Small group report back: “Church and Theology”

## Conversation 2: What themes did you hear in the stories?



friendships	listening to the people around your community of faith	Appreciative inquiry, look it up
get to know the neighbours	Consider the barriers (physical, cultural, etc) to inclusion and participation	we are all invaluable, like flowers in a bouquet... but need to wrestle with issues of unity AND diversity
connecting with your neighbours	Living mission, not about a building	moving from beyond tolerance to celebration
Need for intentionality toward intercultural composition of leadership teams	Develop a plan!!	hospitality
inclusivity, respect, acceptance, new space for all to live.	The power of hearing stories from other churches	learning begins with listening
Recognizing other cultural events and celebrations equally	multidimensional dimensions of friendship & relationality: personal, civic, ecclesial	Explore uniformity as different from unity
exploring and expanding what it means to be neighbour...		



## Small groups verbal report: “Church and Theology”

### Transcription:

With your own words what stood out for you? What are you still mulling over--what kinds of themes in relation to the question of church and theology?

This is about rethinking. What we mean by church. We have got 20, almost 21 centuries of thinking church and now we're rethinking, we're having to reconfigure this thing we call church. And having to reimagine a future for our church.

One of the things that that I raised that I think about is: How do we attend to how our theologies around power and difference have put us into the place we are at now, and how do we start to work in order to create the world we're trying to work at. But the questions of theology of power, and what our theologies around that. There is so much emphasis on God, the powerful, God the King and so very little about the God who empties God, self, the God that relinquishes power, the God that becomes vulnerable. Those are critical questions of theology of power that need to be recovered.

Maybe we need to go back to house worship. When they got together in their church, they knew each other. They broke Bread. They celebrated and held each other. It's a smaller group and we don't you don't have a minister in the group! It's all of you together, and you are ministers at that time. We talked about safe space, and that, for example, is a safe space. We talked about knowing our neighbour. We come into somebody's house, and we are accepted as we are, and we share who we are, and even if it's just a glass of water that we share. The point of point is you leave feeling, “Oh, my gosh! hat was something that was powerful.” I can call them and say, “You were in church yesterday. What did the minister mean when she said...What did you mean when you said such and such and you have that communication. And it's like open and sweet and innocent and....

There's something critical in that and important for us is to revive the professionalism in our churches. How that sometimes may prevent us from actually coming together in meeting, because somebody seems to have a corner on how to interpret the difficult text. And in fact, as a community, we actually are an enormous reservoir of interpretive skills.

I just wanted to share something I've been thinking about as I've been learning about my own history and the Mar Thoma Church. And that is the law of Thomas which is in a in a book that I shared with my with my group. It's called “Ecumenism in Praxis: a Historical Critique of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church” by Joseph Daniel. Its about the Law of Saint Thomas in the first century supposedly created by St. Thomas the Apostle. The law is that each one could be saved by one's own law, and all which are right lead men to heaven. When I read that it was kind of like a mind-blowing moment for me because for the longest time, I thought the position of all Christian churches was that salvation can only be achieved by God alone. I think that the context of that of the law is really important. First century India was always pluralistic and has never been a mono-religious country. So, in order for Christianity to survive in that first century Indian context, we needed to love and respect all religious communities.

Wow! phenomenal. So, there are antecedents aren't there. I mean the Church is rich with a whole lot of examples all over the world where there were some levels of coexistence that is important for us to retrieve and rethink. But I'm really captured by your notion of salvation. I mean church is pretty much linked to the notion of salvation. So interculturality is in many ways also an invitation to refine that



theology. This need to be saved, after all, who does this saving? And how do we get access to that? I mean lots of questions there, for sure.

### Conversation 3: “Theoretical and Language”

There were a number of questions around what we identified as a theme of “**Theoretical and Language.**” Two that we pulled out are on your screen. Think about which you would like to engage.

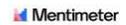
- **How can we examine our biases as barriers to interculturality: re-evaluate colonizing attitudes, values and ways of being?**
- **How do we experience and embrace different ways of knowing?**

Important: In your groups you will not be asked to answer the questions, but to share stories of how your communities and contexts are engaging or might engage these questions.

Listen carefully to each others’ stories. For a time of reporting back your conversation, we will not be asking you to retell those stories. We will ask you to identify themes you heard across the stories.

### Small group report back: “Theoretical and Language”

## Conversation 3: What themes did you hear in the stories?



sharing stories	Don't be afraid of getting it wrong, because sometimes we will get it wrong	how stories are told, where and by whom, can create safe space or unsafe space
examine our own biases	Culture is embedded in each representation of Christianity	Try something different and be willing to make mistakes!
How do we learn to share our story in a way that people will understand?	raising awareness/educating groups and circles on power, privilege and biases	openness to different ways of learning, one size doesn't fit all
challenge of uncovering unconscious biases - starting from a place of curiosity and openness can help	Not just different ways to learn but different places	sorry, just realized I hadn't refreshed Mentimeter for new question!
Listen to their stories first	challenges of cross-cultural story-telling and issues of power as to how!	Keep examining bias, learning history in new ways makes me think differently about my history

## Small groups verbal report: “Theoretical and Language”

### Transcription:

One of the things that I'm wrestling with, it is even in in the sort of that wondering of ways, of knowing and sharing ways of knowing that that that you mentioned earlier about biases. But I also think there's ingrained in us sort of a level of acceptability. And sometimes the stories, or our way of knowing or whatever doesn't fit into whatever that ingrained sort of acceptability is. And so, some of the trying to figure out what it is we collectively can do to sort of crack, open that and break it down a bit, so that more stories become more ways, of knowing become natural rather than having to be into whatever that that that level of acceptability is.

I think it's important for us to think about the fact that all of us come at this conversation with our very assumptions about other people, all of us do there isn't a single person that doesn't come with their own assumptions. Some come at it defensively, some at it from a perspective of victimization; some come at it from a perspective of not even realizing that they are part of the dominant group and part of the rethinking of this quote unquote: Acceptability.

Sometimes we are not aware of those various assumptions. It's a part of these exercises to really engage in a very awkward self-critical perspective that allow us to examine ourselves and ask the question how am I coming at this conversation, what are the issues that I'm bringing to this conversation.

I used the word awareness instead of to educate, because when I make you aware of whatever the situation is, then you have a choice. Am I going to do this in this moment. So, am I going to know that I know? Am I going to make a difference? Or I can say, let me educate you, and I tell you all these things. My hope my hope is that in thinking interculturality we move a little bit further from I have to educate you to you educate me. Please. I want to be educated. Yes, you are now made aware of this.

Yes, that's critical. If I say something they're going to think I'm the one with power. And if that person speaks, why should this person speak? The intention is to really come at it and realize that we create spaces where people can disagree. But at least we agree that we're working together towards a common goal. I think that is a critical point, a common goal that makes many people awkward, including ourselves.

You have many tools for helping people to learn and many ways and places to do it. But you can't apply those tools until you listened. The example that was used was a pastor. He was in a congregation of refugees and immigrants, and they lived in, and had experiences that most of us have never can't even fathom the depth of challenge that they've gone through. And if you don't give them space to tell their story, how can you begin to bring what you have to offer to the table?

And let me just add a little bit: Listening is no passive exercise. It is actually very active engagement and sometimes it's not just about staying there and let people talk while you're twiddling your thumbs. Not by a long shot. it's actually hearing what people are saying, and how that impacts on you. It's a different attitude, a different way of engaging things that that is a really hard thing to do.

## Final Conversation

- **What did you hear that you consider important key for conversations on interculturality?**
- **What new questions arise from your conversations?**
- **What are ideas you have for your local context to continue this conversation? What might we do and be as we engage interculturality as communities of faith?**

### Transcription:

What I battle is organizational. It is the desire to always put things into a newsletter or an email and I don't think hardly anybody first of all reads those things, and it's a very poor way to compete with people's busy lives. The best the best way to get somebody involved is to call them or meet with them, and say, I would like to do this. Would you like to come with me? You know, I want to go down to Allen Gardens and go for a walk in the park, see where the homeless are hanging. Would you come with me and when you do it at that level of personal it's very hard to say no. But a newsletter that says on Tuesday I'm going down. Come join. You know nobody will come.

One: Build relationships as a requirement to connect with people and to build a sense of trust you are going to walk together with them. And then in the process you're going to learn together so it's addressing the safety issue. I can I afford to make mistakes. I'm going to go to, for example a Muslim service of prayers on pride, and you know, I am going to make mistakes. Do I kneel down? Can I sit? I'm only going to screw up here. But if you say, you can come with so come with me then the person is going to feel safer. And more willing to take the risk than they would for sure.

That comment made me really think about whether these practices that we've been talking about, of listening, of curiosity and living into interculturality. Can these things only be done at the individual and interpersonal level? Or how do we implement these kinds of principles and practices at a community level, at a systemic level? Because that's really critical for creating social change and many of us belong to institutions as well and wield some sort of influence or power in these institutions. And so how so? How do we do this work at that?

At a systems level or community level. That's a big question that that requires one afternoon of really critical conversation. And to talk about power. But that's a critical question.

There is no single solution, right? There is no formula of how to do this.

Well, more and more from what I'm hearing is, how do we equip our leaders, ourselves with tools? How do we continue to raise awareness or educate? Depending on how you engage with that terminology, to facilitate and navigate these conversations and create spaces of learning.

I think that that training piece, that that equipping piece is really key absolutely. As you know, the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) has a whole training on interculturality. That's the very question that the 5-day program "Engage difference!" is organized around. It brings people together to wrestle with that question. It's not that there's a set prescription or of how this is done. But it is 5 days of bringing people together in conversation like this around together, discerning what are the ways that we equip each other, equip our communities to ask the same kinds of questions to have these kinds of conversations.



Now that we're learning to live with Covid we are relaunching those programs in 2023. So watch for promotion of those programs. And there's a number of people on here who have been part of those programs and have shaped those programs as well

Part of the reason I work on social justice through faith communities is because, I think use the example of going to City Hall during the budget fighting for more money for equity programs and low income, and with very little impact when the counselors look out at the room and see who's there it's the same 100 people all the time. My hope is that by engaging faith communities we can bring more people to the table, make the tent bigger and therefore have more political impact.

I think it might be useful to encourage people to see this as a journey, and even just do a check-in every year, maybe in the fall, or some particular important time of the year. To you and see if you're thinking the same way. Certainly, as humans we should be evolving and open to change. Viewing this as a journey can be really helpful.

## Closing remarks

### [Néstor Medina]

Let me just say a couple of things, if it's okay with you. One thing is interculturality is not the same as diversity. Intercultural doesn't happen if you bring more people to the table. It doesn't happen but you have greater chances of having interculturality. If those in the positions of power are different, racialized, and there is a sharing the power by all those stakeholders. In other words, as we work towards interculturality, there is a need to carry a kind of a prophetic voice. You try to constantly to right these inherited structures and recognize that there is going to be some people that might not be happy with the outcome. When you see that it's a good indication. Even though you might not sleep well as a result of it.

Another aspect of interculturality is that you open up. And not close up to another's experience or the experience of another, that is to say, interculturality requires that you think of the world and of yourself, not as the center of it. Rather that you are one part in the big, beautiful machine creation is, and that your voice is one small one, and that there are hundreds of other voices that would love to engage you, and enter conversation with you. Interculturality then requires that we don't think about centre and periphery but rather upon a host of other multiple centers, and those centres coming into conversation with each other. It is a moment of dislocation for those that are accustomed to being at the centre It is also a moment of opportunity. Go to those that are often on the margins. We all have to come with some level of grace, because sometimes we may come with our own frustration and our own experiences of victimization. That's just what this requires.

### [Jonathan Schmidt]

I'm so grateful for all of you spending this time together in conversation. It's such a privilege to be part of this. It's a moment of what the community of faith, or the church, can be. A little glimpse of the very thing that we're talking about here. One piece of the language I like around interculturality is "creative imagination." Today we participated in an activity of creative imagination, imagining new tools, and new ways of being. We are doing that together.

A number of groups across Canada met first and engaged the document from the Theology and Research group and came up with questions that arose from their contexts. There were 2 pages of questions, and the theology and research group did a miracle of bringing that down to the 6 questions you engaged today. I will share that list of questions with you. I'm a little reticent to share the written words and documents because all of a sudden it becomes codified. I think it's not the actual questions answers, or words, but the process that is important. I'm going to share the questions forwarded by the local groups, the report back from today's small groups, and the transcript of our large group conversations. I invite you to use those, not as a "cannon" or set documents, but rather to find ways to inspire you to find tools for doing this, taking this conversation forward in your local communities. and so that's the last thing I want to do again. This is not about coming up with a final document this. This is about a process, and I really hope that today has inspired you to come up with ways to do more of the same in your local communities, and in when you next come back together, and connect in other spaces.

So thank you all for your time. Thank you all for your wisdom, for the experience you bring to this. Thank you for your stories.