



(www.schon.com/gallery/s-editions/images/dialogue)

"And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them."

**Day of Dialogue on the Blessing of Same Sex Unions
November 29, 2003**

DIOCESAN DAY OF DIALOGUE ON THE BLESSING OF SAME-SEX UNIONS

**Saturday, November 29, 2003
St. Stephen's Anglican Church**

Introduction

We live out our Christian experience through study of God's word, through prayer, and through our actions. Members of the Task Force have invited you to participate in this Diocesan-wide Day of Dialogue on the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions. We are delighted and give thanks to God that you have agreed to participate in this very special day.

Many of you, as we ourselves did at the first Task Force meetings, have undoubtedly come with your own agendas. Some may be suspicious of the process itself and wonder if it is not a subtle attempt to convert you to a different viewpoint. Others come anxious to reach a decision and may be frustrated at the thought of yet "more talk" on this issue that confronts our society, church and our lives on a weekly, if not a daily basis. Still others may wonder what the fuss is all about, and why don't we just get on with it. We know how you feel, because we've been there ourselves.

But those of us on the Task Force have changed, and what has changed us has been the process of dialogue. We've learned that when each person is allowed to speak his or her own truth in a safe and respectful environment, God blesses us as He helps us learn to trust one another. That stomach-wrenching feeling of fear and anxiety that we had in our guts each time we met has been taken away, and God has replaced it with a spirit of trust and openness.

We've learned that the dialogue process provides a way for those of us with strong personal convictions on either side of this issue to speak, for our voices to be heard - without being judged, labelled, or pilloried. God has given us a safe place to speak to each other, and to Him. The task that we share together today is to learn first to speak personally from the heart, and then to learn to listen to each other in that same spirit of openness. We know that this will be a challenge for many - it is not easy to truly listen openly when the speaker's experience and convictions are so different are from your own.

Open minds and hearts, trust, respect, a spirit of discovery, flexibility and commitment are essential to the process; but the foundation for success is a willingness to listen to God in prayer and to one another with respect. The process of

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“Dialogue” we are proposing is founded on listening skills, good lines of communication, a willingness to share ideas and feelings and an ability to share honestly about ourselves, our convictions and values. We see it as a way of coming together as God’s people to pray, to reflect, to study, to discern, to act and think as a whole.

At the heart of this process is prayer and we believe that if we act out of prayer, the dialogue process will not become a task that has an either/or or a win/lose perspective. We believe that God is speaking to all of us, regardless on where we stand on the issue. All along the way, it will be important to turn to God -- as individuals and as a group, to pray for the wisdom, faith and courage needed to seek and to find the best ways for doing the will and work of God.

Parish Dialogue: Prayer and Discernment

The Diocesan Day of Dialogue is the first of a two-step process of dialogue on the issue of same-sex blessings. We believe that before our Anglican community can move to a decision, we need to enter into a process where all members of the community respond to this issue as a challenge from God.

We hope that each parish will come together to discern, through prayer and dialogue, the direction God is calling them in this time and place. Therefore, each parish is asked to conduct its *dialogue process* in the spirit of discernment.¹ Discernment demands prayer, insight, listening and surrender to God's will. The more the Church participates in the practice of discernment, the more it is empowered to engage in it in fresh and creative ways.

We do not know what direction God is calling us in at this point and time, but we do know that when we open ourselves to each other, we open ourselves to God. Through discernment, prayer and reflection, we seek the will of God and, as we surrender to Him, we also open up our parishes to renewal.

Discernment is the disciplined and honest attempt to discover *what God is doing* in our parish and diocese and *what God's will is* for our parish and diocese. Discernment subjects our biases, preferences and convictions to scrutiny. As we listen to each other today and as we share together at a parish level, those priorities and preferences must themselves be examined in the light of the Reign of God as it is unfolding in this time and place. ***Ultimately, it is the voice of God for which we listen and to which we must hearken in all our processes.***

¹ The purpose of any discernment process is to seek God’s will in an area where a decision is required. Discernment should also be used when the decision in question may be about a more personal matter. (Am I called to help coordinate the process in our parish? In what ways do I experience God’s call?) Discernment is based upon an understanding of the mission of the Church as participation in the mission and activity of God. From the time of the early Church, Christians have gathered to pray, to share wisdom, to reflect and to make choices. Congregations of women and men religious have preserved and refined this tradition.

Scripture: Romans 12:3-13

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Love

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

Dialogue

In the following section, we have attempted to provide you with some basic materials on the process of dialogue that the taskforce is proposing. Please take the time to read them attentively for we are introducing a particular form of dialogue developed by David Bohm and further articulated by Peter Senge in **The Fifth Discipline**. We often use the term dialogue interchangeably with conversation or debate. Our experience has taught us that “dialogue” requires a re-framing of the way we speak and listen to each other. Our invitation to you is to embark on this wonderful journey of “dialogue” and to use these materials as your guidepost.

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THINKING IN THE ROUND

DEVELOPING OUR COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING
THROUGH DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE

Dialogue 1. A talking together; conversation 2. Interchange and discussion of ideas, esp. when open and frank, as in seeking mutual understanding or harmony. *Webster's New World Dictionary*

Roots are from Greek; *dia* meaning through and *logos* translates into meaning. The late quantum physicist David Bohm suggests that the original meaning of dialogue was the "meaning passing or moving through... a free flow of meaning between people, in the sense of a stream that flows between two banks. (Senge, 1990)

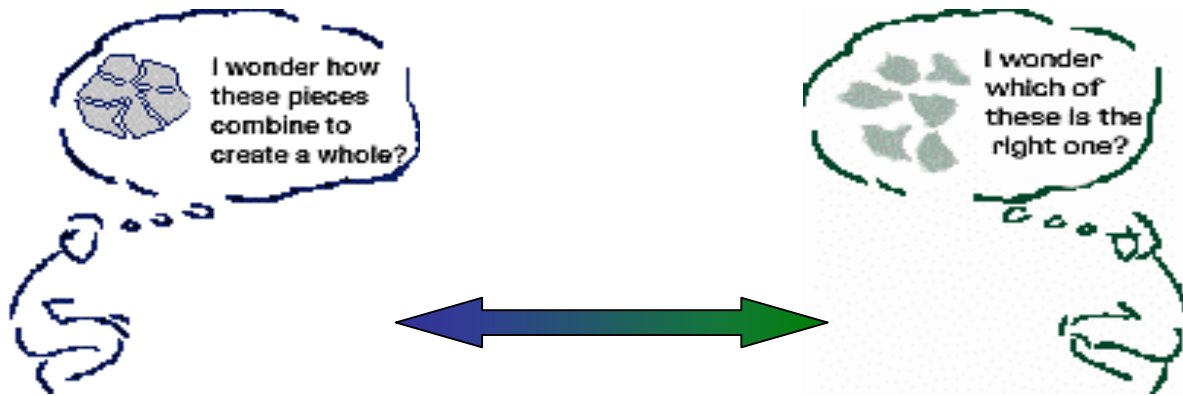
Through dialogue we can move:

From	To
an individual understanding	a collective understanding
I know	we know
individuality	mutuality
perceiving through individual filters	learning how others "see"

Comparing dialogue to discussion/debate further illustrates the potential value of dialogue.

Discussion/Debate	Dialogue
Breaking issues/problems into parts	Seeing the whole that encompasses the parts
Seeing distinctions and differences	Seeing connections and relationships
Justifying/defending assumptions	Inquiring into assumptions
Persuading, selling, telling	Learning through inquiry and disclosure
Choosing one meaning among many	Creating shared meaning among many

(Devane, T. & Holman, P., (1999)



DIALOGUE

We *learn* through inquiry and disclosure

We *inquire* into our assumptions

We create *shared meaning* from many perspectives

We think in *relationship*

We see the *connections* between ideas

DISCUSSION

We *persuade, sell, and tell*

We *justify* and *defend* our assumptions

We gain agreement on *one meaning*

We think *alone*

We see the *distinctions* between ideas

CONVERSATIONAL ARCHETYPES

Type	Intent	Dynamic
Debate	To gain a <i>Victory</i>	<u>FENCING</u> We shape meaning into carefully crafted positions, which we then wield like swords, attacking and defending until one side is declared victorious.
Negotiation	To come to an <i>agreement</i>	<u>LOBBYING</u> The creation of meaning is driven by self-interests. We search for paradigms that will convince others that it is in their best interest to act in a way that is mutually beneficial.
Discussion	To make <i>decisions</i>	<u>Sparring</u> We test our own existing ideas and beliefs against each other. This enables us to strengthen and refine our positions and arguments so that, in the end, we can arrive at firm conclusions.
Brainstorming	To generate a <i>new idea</i>	<u>SIFTING</u> We search for meaning as if we were panning for gold. Our collective mind works like a sieve. We fill it with as much material as possible and then sift through the rubble of ideas to collect the odd nugget of value.
Dialogue	To deepen our <i>understanding</i>	<u>EXPLORING</u> We inquire deeply and allow meaning to flow freely so that we can learn and expand what we know. Our focus is on the journey, not the destination, though many surprising destinations may be reached.



Developed by Tana Paddock, Sprung Rhythm Facilitation

THE PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE

- ***Temporarily release your desire for outcomes.*** Enter into the conversation with the sole intention of building shared meaning, of understanding what is not yet understood.
- ***Listen intently and inquire deeply*** with a willingness to be influenced. Find out what is behind other people's positions. What life experiences led them to adopt their point of view? What is it about what the other person is saying that can lead the group to deeper insight? Re-engage the curiosity and wonder you had as a child.
- ***Suspend your judgment*** of others and let go of the tendency to decide whether what they are saying is right or wrong. Each time a judgment surfaces, simply notice it. Do not act on it immediately. Leave it hanging there for a while to give space for new meanings to emerge.
- ***Acknowledge and explore underlying assumptions-*** your beliefs, intellectual constructs, values, expectations, and priorities.
- ***Direct your thoughts to the group as a whole, not to the individuals that make up the group.*** If possible, sit in a circle. Imagine that you are sitting around a campfire and that you are speaking into the fire.
- ***Speak only when you are moved to speak.*** If you are someone who likes to talk, this will help you not to monopolize the conversation.
- ***Welcome silence.*** Resist the temptation to fill moments of awkward silence. Instead, take the time to reflect and listen for new possibilities.

LISTENING AND ASSUMPTIONS

There are primarily two focuses when one is engaged in dialogue; actively listening to another while I am actively engaged listening to myself, attempting to understand my own assumptions.

Assumptions:

Dialogue is facilitated when we become aware that every person in the group comes with different assumptions and that connecting with the other is facilitated when we become more aware of our own tacit assumptions and recognize that others in the conversation may be operating from different assumptions.

Thus in order to prepare for the use of dialogue, David Bohm suggests the following:

- all participants must "suspend" their assumptions, literally as if to hold them "as if suspended before us";
- all participants must regard one another as colleagues;
- there must be a "facilitator" who "holds the context" of dialogue. (Senge, 1990)

Suspending assumptions: this does not mean denying assumptions or pretending that they do not exist or that assumptions are "bad". It literally means holding them out there suspended in front of oneself and the group, constantly accessible to questioning and observation. This cannot be done if we are busy defending our opinions nor can it be done if we are unaware of our assumptions.

While it sounds simple to say that all participants must regard another as colleagues, it is quite difficult in practice, particularly when members from different levels of a hierarchy are present at discussions. It is easy to feel collegial when everyone agrees however when there are significant disagreements, it is more difficult.

The role of the facilitator is to ensure that dialogue remains the focus of exchange, for our habits of thought pull us away from dialogue into discussion and debate. The facilitator also participates for as the group develops experiences and skills in dialogue, the role of the facilitator becomes less crucial.

FACILITATING DIALOGUE

An open dialogue can be helped by facilitation. An experienced facilitator can be brought in or the role can be held by one or more -- or all -- of the participants. The simplest form of facilitation involves creating a comfortable setting, with chairs arranged in a circle and ensuring that all involved have a chance to speak.

Some facilitators talk with participants about broad dialogue guidelines and get them to agree to try applying them. Often guidelines are posted on a wall where they can be referred to or they are put on cards and distributed so that each person has one guideline to keep in mind on behalf of the group.

Guidelines for dialogue in its most basic form:

1. We talk about what's really important to us.
2. We really listen to each other. We see how thoroughly we can understand each other's views and experience.
3. We say what's true for us without making each other wrong.
4. We see what we can learn together by exploring things together.
5. We avoid monopolizing the conversation. We make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

Facilitation techniques

Groups that have a difficult time mastering dialogue on their own may want to try one of the following techniques:

- 1) The group passes an object of some sort around the circle in a predictable sequence. Whoever is holding the object has the floor. For more spontaneity, the object can be placed back in the center after the person has finished speaking so that it is available for the next person who is moved to speak. Another variation of this method is to decide that no one speaks two times until everyone has spoken once.
- 2) Give everyone an equal number (for example, four) marbles, one of which they put into a bowl in the middle whenever they speak. When they run out of marbles, they can't speak again until everyone else has run out. In a small group, you don't need marbles; just agree that each person won't speak again until everyone else has.
- 3) An object is placed in the center. When someone picks up the object, they get the next turn after whoever is currently talking. This enables participation by less dominant, more reflective people who aren't inclined to compete for turns in fast-moving, often competitive conversations.
- 4) A bell or chime is placed in the center of the conversation space so that if at any time a participant feels that the conversation is losing its center, they can ring the bell. All talking stops immediately until the sound fades. When conversation begins again, it usually has a more centered, reflective quality.

RESOURCES ON DIALOGUE

Websites

Website of Executive Development International, which includes an entire page on the results of their research on the value of dialogue in business:

http://www.execdevint.co.uk/dialogue_resources.html

Website dedicated to David Bohm's work on Dialogue:

<http://www.muc.de/~heuvel/dialogue/index.html>

Website of The Financial Planning Association, which includes a page on how the organization is using Dialogue:

<http://www.fpanet.org/member/connections/face/whydialogue.cfm>

Website of the U.S. National Park Service, which includes a page on how the Philadelphia region is using Dialogue:

http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/fac_dialogue.htm

Website of the Co-intelligence Institute, with practical suggestions for how to help groups engage in dialogue:

<http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html>

Hale, J. P. (1995). *The Theory and Practice of Dialogue in Organizational Settings*. CSWT Reports. <http://www.workteams.unt.edu/reports/jphale.htm>

Kaipa, P. and Volckmann R. (1999) *An Application of Bohmian Dialogue in Organizations*. Retrieved on 03/16/03 from the following internet site:

<http://www.mithya.com/learning/dialoguecase.html>

Books

Bohm, D. (1996). *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.

Devane, T & Holman, P., eds (1999) *The Change Handbook*. San Fransico, CA:Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Ellinor, L and Gerard, G. (1998). *Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

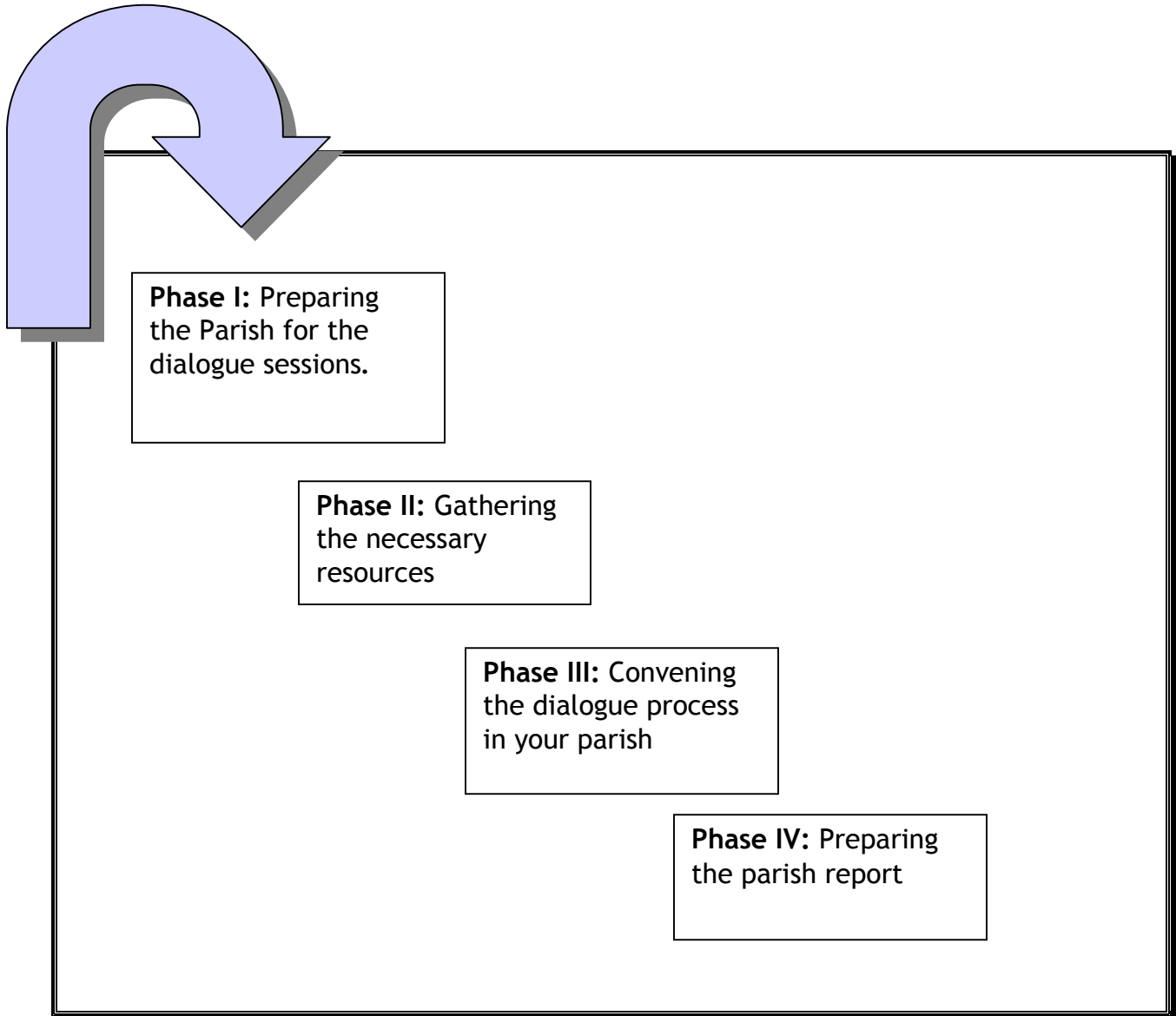
Flick, D. L. (1998). *From Debate to Dialogue: Using the Understanding Process to Transform Our Conversations*. Orchid Publications.

Isaacs, William (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (formerly of the MIT Dialgoue Project), with an intro by Peter Senge. New York: Doubleday.

Kleiner, A., Roberts, R., Ross, R., Senge, P. (1994) *The Fifth Discipline Handbook*. New York NY, Doubleday

Senge, Peter (1990) *The fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR YOUR PARISH DIALOGUE



PHASE I: PREPARING THE PARISH FOR THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS. It is important at the outset to ensure the support of the leaders of your parish for the process you are about to undertake. Remember that most people will not have attended November 29th and will not understand what is meant by "dialogue". Draw any material from in this booklet, however importantly, in your own words, inform the leaders of your parish of what you are about to undertake. It is important to highlight the purpose of the parish dialogue is to create a place where all members (regardless of where they stand on the issue) come together to share and listen to others. It is especially important to highlight the gift of thinking together which transcends positions. The dialogue forums are not places to debate nor to convince others of any position. In fact, they are quite the opposite for they are forums where one "opens" to others and listens at a deeper level to discover how God is working in all.

Here are some suggestions:

- ❑ Participation will be facilitated if the dialogue process is announced by the leaders of the parish through church bulletins, announcements at Mass, etc...
- ❑ Try to plan for an initial session of dialogue sometime in mid to late January. You may have to plan for two sessions to ensure that you get those who will not be able to attend the first session.
- ❑ Be open to planning follow-up sessions using the model of what we learned on November 29th where the follow-up group reviews what was learned from the last session and agrees on a question to pursue.

Phase II: Gathering the necessary resources. There are a number of documents from the booklet you received that are available electronically for you may wish to create your own parish booklet. The simplest way is to make copies from the materials provided.

Here are some other suggestions:

- ❑ Frame the dialogue session as an act of prayer and discernment.
- ❑ Find some scripture passages that inspire you and use them to open the dialogue sessions. (there are two readings provided in this booklet) You may want to put a bible and candle in the middle of the circle as well.
- ❑ Place chairs in a circle remove the tables to ensure that the room set-up is conducive to dialogue.
- ❑ Remember to review the principles of dialogue and have materials ready for participants. It may be helpful to create posters with guidelines for dialogue to be put on the walls of the room.
- ❑ If your group is large, please feel free to call members of the task force and ask for help.
- ❑ As the members of your parish become familiar with the process, you will find that the need for facilitators diminishes.

Phase III: Convening the dialogue process in your parish. It may be helpful to schedule two sessions at the outset and foresee when a follow-up session could take place. We have included a definition of the role of the facilitator with this handbook. The ultimate goal is to allow the participants to facilitate themselves. This in turn is highly dependent on the facilitator's ability not to over facilitate.

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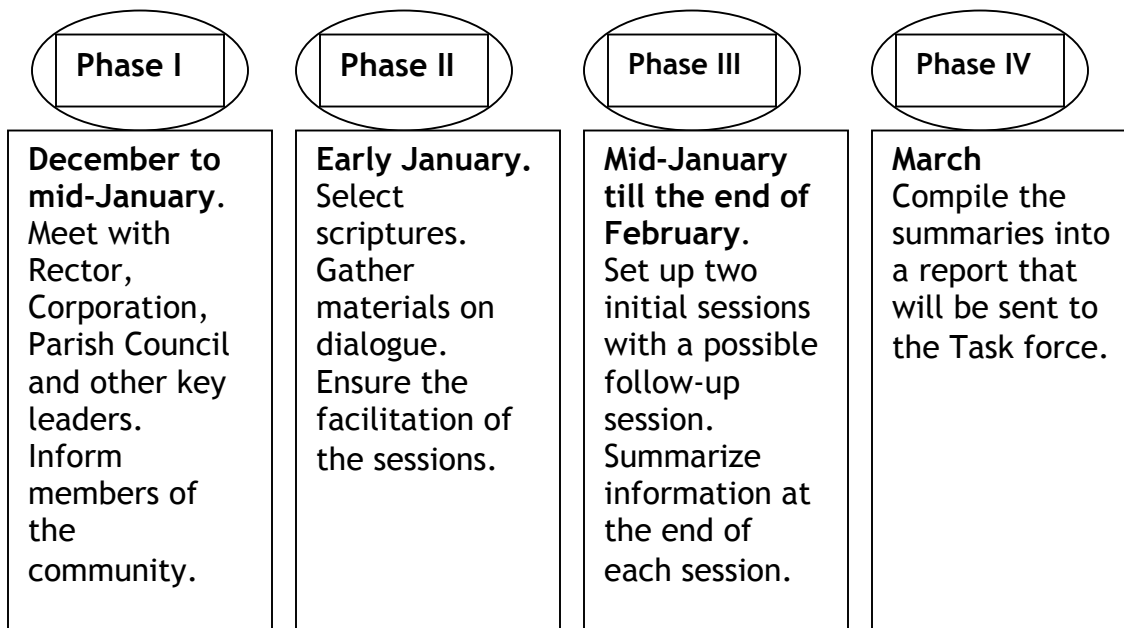
- ❑ The facilitator usually intervenes in the first session by gently calling the group to respect the guidelines and not fall into a debate or discussion.
- ❑ If you need any further support or would like a member of the task force to assist you in your first dialogue session, please ask for support.
- ❑ At the end of the dialogue session, invite the participants to write down what they have learned and any insights they have gained. This should be done in point form to summarize what has been learned. A report of these summaries will be forwarded to the task force at the end of the parish sessions.

Phase IV: Preparing the parish report. Report writing will be greatly facilitated if there are summary sheets from each of the dialogue sessions. At the end of the sessions, we ask that each parish prepare a summary report in the following format.

WHAT WE LEARNED AS A PARISH	INSIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY
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Again, please document in point form. Members of the task force will attempt to compile the information drawn from all parishes in a similar format titled, "What we are learning as a community in the Diocese of Ottawa and insights from members of the community".

TIMELINE:



CONVENING DIALOGUE: THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE.

- ❑ Participate in the Diocesan Day of Dialogue Held on November 29th.
- ❑ Plan and organize the parish dialogue groups.
- ❑ Encourage the active participation of all members of the parish to enter into a process of dialogue.
- ❑ Organize and schedule with the appropriate persons in the parish (Priest, Parish Council, Corporation) for the dialogue sessions.
- ❑ Convene the dialogue sessions. (Participants will be informed about the dialogue process and formed through experiencing it on November 29th).
- ❑ Prepare a summary of what was learned and discovered through the process back to the task force.
- ❑ During the dialogue sessions, the facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared listening amongst participants. The facilitator takes the role of managing the process of the meeting.

Facilitator responsibilities during the sessions:

- Start on time
- Reviews and proposes the dialogue process
- Keep the participants focused on the dialogue process
- End on time or extend time by mutual agreement.

This Handbook was prepared by the Diocesan Task Force on the Blessing of Same Sex Unions with the support of Raphael Amato, consultant.