



### Goals of the *Connecting Voices* initiative

Organized by the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), the *Connecting Voices* initiative will do the following:

- Articulate where progressive Methodists are theologically in 2011.
- Build the progressive Methodist movement by welcoming new people into the life of MFSA.
- Involve in particular young adults and people of color, who are often underrepresented in MFSA.
- Use new technology to foster and improve communication between progressive Methodists.

### Where to find resources:

- Visit [mfsaweb.org](http://mfsaweb.org) and click on "Connecting Voices" under "Quick links" on the left side of the page. Here you will find information about *Connecting Voices* and downloadable including a postcard, flier, and leader's guide.
- "Like" our Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/ConnectingVoices](http://www.facebook.com/ConnectingVoices).
- Also on the website, you can find a map of where *Connecting Voices* meet-ups are happening. Be sure to share your event by emailing [jennifer@mfsaweb.org](mailto:jennifer@mfsaweb.org).

### Gathering a Group:

- Invite a group of **5-8 people** to come together. Be intentional about including people of different age, gender, color, ethnicity, ability, socio-economic class, sexual orientation or gender identity. For MFSA chapters, be sure that no more than 1/3 of group participants are active members. The goal is to get new voices at the table.
- When inviting people, be as personal as possible (face-to-face or phone call invitations are much more meaningful than mass emails). Encourage those you invite to bring others who are interested in connecting to other progressives.
- Advertise your meet-up on the MFSA webpage. Send your date, time and location to [jennifer@mfsaweb.org](mailto:jennifer@mfsaweb.org).

### Planning the Meet up:

- Meet in someone's home, a local café, or other comfortable meeting place. Make sure that the venue is a safe, accessible space for all participants. Consider factors such as transportation, time of day/week, and accessibility to the building where the meet up will be held.
- If refreshments aren't already available, consider providing them.
- Meet-ups should last for about an hour and a half but for **no more than two hours**. Make this known to participants ahead of time, and be respectful of people's time by keeping to the schedule.
- Arrange for someone to be the note-taker regarding responses to the discussion questions below. You'll want to have the record both for future group planning, and for reporting back to other groups participating in *Connecting Voices*.

## **Leading the Meet up:**

- Open the meeting with prayer.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves, sharing their connections to the group, reason for participating.
- Explain the meeting as an opportunity for progressives (and those who want to explore the term) to gather and discuss their faith. The discussion will be broken into two parts: sharing faith stories, and creating community for action. Each should take between 30 and 40 min. Allow for a break in between. (See questions on next page)
- As you facilitate, promote equal sharing. Before discussion begins, encourage participants to be conscious of the amount of time they speak. Those who contribute easily should leave room for those who may need a bit more time to open up. As a leader, do not hesitate to encourage quieter members to participate, or ask frequent contributors to wait until others have shared. Be mindful of the time and move the group along so as to end on time.
- As you come to the end of the session, circulate the *Connecting Voices* contact sheet. This will allow all participants to connect with the national *Connecting Voices* initiative, organized by the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA). After the meeting, please send a copy to MFSA communications and outreach staff, Jennifer Mihok [jennifer@mfsaweb.org]. Communicate to the group that through the *Connecting Voices* initiative, participants will be able to connect with progressive Methodists from around the country—and in their own areas.
- Encourage participants to host a *Connecting Voices* event of their own. Perhaps a few from your meet-up would like to co-lead another group. Provide this guide and your contact information to help them get started.
- Close in prayer.

## **Questions for discussion:**

*Be sure to share these with the note-taker!*

### Sharing faith stories

- How do you experience God, Jesus and the Spirit?
- What do you believe about how we are called to live?
- How do you understand the word “progressive” as in “progressive Christian?”
- Would you describe your faith as “progressive?” Why or why not?
- How can we respond to different (and opposing) theologies and faith expressions?

### **Brief Pause**

#### Creating community for action

- What does “putting faith into action” mean to you? Give some examples.
- How are you putting faith into action in your life? Is it through the church? Another avenue?
- How might a progressive Methodist movement be meaningful to you?
- In what ways would you like to be involved in a progressive, Methodist movement?

## **Sharing back with *Connecting Voices* (MFSA)**

- Find the citizen journalists among you and record a brief video testimony or dialogue to be shared on MFSA’s YouTube channel: MFSAVoices.
- Go to the *Connecting Voices* Facebook page and share points from your discussion.
- E-mail some key notes from your discussion to jennifer@mfsaweb.org.
- Talk about your experience with *Connecting Voices* with other folks who might be interested.
- Share your experiences and the *Connecting Voices* webpage with others on your social networking sites.