

FAITH COMMUNITIES & THE PEOPLE'S SUPPER



In times of heightened tension, division, and expressions of hate, faith and spiritual communities have a vital role to play in being stewards of resilience, collective courage, and creating braver space in the presence of difference. At the same time, faith communities – like any family – can also be places where we avoid hard conversations and discomfort, instead of leaning into vulnerability, risk, and the authentic relationships we need.

The People's Supper provides an opportunity for communities from all religious traditions to do what they do best: bring people together for fellowship, renewal, good food, and the chance to go beneath the surface to explore the struggles and stories that make up our lives.

As a special add-on to the Host Guidebooks, this resource is intended for members and leaders of faith communities who would like to make the most of The People's Supper. Whether your community is 200 years old or was just founded last week, we hope that The People's Supper can support you in forging better conversations and creating the authentic, grounded relationships we need in this political moment.



SUGGESTED DINNER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

*In addition to the questions in *The People's Supper Host Guidebooks*, consider using some of the below storytelling prompts designed specifically for faith communities:*

FOR A HEALING SUPPER ...

- What is a spiritual practice that is giving you strength in this time?
- What stories from your tradition inspire you to be your most courageous self?
- What do you hold sacred?

FOR A BRIDGING SUPPER ...

- Who is someone you know, a historical figure, or a figure from your faith tradition, who models love through their actions?
- In your daily life, how do you activate love to build to the community that you dream of?
- Tell a story about a time recently when you were made to feel that you didn't belong. How did your faith play a role in sustaining you in that moment, if at all?
- What do you hold sacred?

"We started off by dedicating our participation to something or someone. I thought that was really special."

Mandalay, NYC



SPECIAL TIPS FOR PLANNING A PEOPLE'S SUPPER AS A FAITH COMMUNITY

Listen to your community's needs, ask questions, and dream. Gather with members of your community and do a brainstorm about how bringing folks together for a People's Supper might be able to meet your faith community's needs in this time.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO PROMPT YOUR PLANNING PROCESS:

- What work of healing or bridging is being overlooked, or is in great need, in our community?
- What's hard about having brave conversations, building community, and making space for healing within our faith community right now?
- In this historical moment, how have you tried to exercise the values we hold most dear?
- Where have you struggled to be faithful to our values?
- What kinds of relationships do you have with others of different faith traditions, political beliefs, races, generations, class, and cultural backgrounds, and how do you see that reflected in our faith community?
- Who are our neighbors?

START THINKING ABOUT WHAT RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING WITHIN OR OUTSIDE YOUR COMMUNITY. ASK YOURSELVES:

FOR A HEALING SUPPER ...

- Will the supper be for our faith community as a whole, or for people who share a certain identity within our community (i.e., people of color, women, LGBTQ folks, young people, etc)?
- If supper is for a specific or marginalized group, who amongst us holds those identities and can serve as hosts?
- What kind of follow-up can we do to continue this healing work, or expand out into bridging across difference?

FOR A BRIDGING SUPPER ...

- Pt. 1: Tell us a story from your upbringing that gives us a picture of your first experience with community. What was positive in this? And what can you now see that it was missing?
Pt. 2: How does this set you up for your own hopes for building community? A neighborhood? A country?
- If we're going to have dinner with people from outside our community/congregation, what bridging are we most equipped to do based on our existing relationships?

- What kind of relational work might we need to do before the supper to build trust, mutual care, and consent?
- What kind of follow-up can we do to build on the relationships formed at the supper and the conversations that were started?

MAKE YOUR PEOPLE'S SUPPER YOUR OWN.

While reading your Host Guidebook, write down ideas for how to tailor the supper to the unique gifts and needs of your community (for tips on hosting an interfaith supper, see "Insight for Hosting an Interfaith People's Supper on P4). Ask yourselves:

- What does our community do best to help people feel like they are truly seen and heard? How can we replicate that in our People's Supper?
- What spiritual practices, rituals, or stories are there in our tradition that can help create Brave Space at our supper?
- Are their upcoming holidays, milestones, or other parts of our religious calendar that correspond with the hopes for the supper? How could a People's Supper add more depth to a particular holiday or spiritual season in our calendar?
- In our People's Supper, how can we move away from centering those who have the most power in our community and make space for people who are on the margins or the sidelines?

"The challenge these days, is to be somewhere, to belong to some particular place, invest oneself in it, draw strength and courage from it, to dwell in a community."

bell hooks

WHAT IF I WANT TO HOST A PEOPLE'S SUPPER WITH PEOPLE FROM FAITH BACKGROUNDS DIFFERENT FROM MY OWN?

In a time when religion and religious bigotry is being weaponized in countless ways, building more powerful and sustainable relationships across religious difference is life-or-death work. If you're considering hosting an interfaith dinner, awesome! We want to support you in forging connections with people of different faiths and better conversations across difference.

First and foremost, creating a multifaith space requires the insights and leadership of people of different faith backgrounds in the planning process. For this reason, we recommend a co-hosting approach. Co-hosting a supper with another religious community or friends from a different faith background is a great way to grow your ability to lead with people of other faiths, build relationships of trust and accountability, and create a valuable space of connection for your guests.

The best part is that you don't need to be an expert in other people's traditions to create a space that will feel welcoming to people of different religious backgrounds. That's what your relationships with your co-hosts are for – to learn from each other with compassion and humility, ask questions, and work out how to create the space that you need, together.

And remember, it won't be perfect. So don't aim for perfection – aim for brave.

"We decided to cook together to prepare the meal as a community, and I so enjoyed the rich, organic conversations that flowed from us as we chopped vegetables and whipped up some guacamole side by side."

Kiki, Minneapolis

"It was actually one of the best meals I've ever shared. I was so grateful that our table was very diverse, and it brought such a richness of stories and listening capacity. In a time of fear and hurt and rage, the humanizing act of breaking bread and being brave together in our vulnerability was so transformational."

Michelle, Miami

INSIGHTS FOR HOSTING AN INTERFAITH PEOPLE'S SUPPER

BRING TO THE SURFACE YOUR MOTIVATIONS, HOPES, AND COMMITMENTS.

Within your own faith community or with the people you're thinking of hosting with, ask yourselves: What do we hope will be different – for our dinner guests or for our community at large – as a result of bridging religious difference? What kind of commitment can we make to continue to thicken relationships across faith lines after the dinner is over?

MAKE SURE THERE IS BALANCED REPRESENTATION OF FAITH TRADITIONS AMONG GUESTS.

By no means does this mean that you should have every world religion represented at the table. But for an interfaith supper to feel meaningful, and to make sure no one feels like they are being tokenized, it's important to ensure there is substantive participation from the different communities involved. In other words, an interfaith supper doesn't mean eighteen Methodists and one Muslim. You get it!

SCHEDULE YOUR SUPPER FOR A TIME THAT WORKS FOR ALL GUESTS' PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND HOLIDAY CALENDAR.

Let's be real, there's nothing worse than organizing an interfaith event only to find out that it's been scheduled during a holiday in the tradition of a community that has been invited – or being invited to an event dinner scheduled squarely in the middle of your holiest day or days of the year! If you're in charge of finding a date, here is an interfaith calendar you can use as a reference: interfaith-calendar.org. When in doubt about whether a date or time poses a conflict with worship times or holidays, ask!

ENSURE THERE IS FOOD THAT EVERYONE CAN ENJOY!

Cooking vegetarian is the safest way to ensure foods are inclusive of a diverse range of dietary restrictions, religious or otherwise. If you're doing a potluck and are unsure about what guidelines to give folks on food preparation, ask your co-hosts about their tradition's needs and/or ask guests to name any particular food restrictions. And remember, dining together across religious difference is not just about figuring out what each other doesn't eat – it's about learning what foods we do eat and love. Consider encouraging your guests to bring a dish that is meaningful in their faith, such as a special food that they ate at a holiday growing up. To keep track of who's bringing what, use our [Google sheets template!](#)

USE FOOD OR OTHER RELIGIOUS OBJECTS AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR STORIES.

From breaking Ramadan fast with dates, to matza bread to Christmas cookies, and beyond, food often plays a central role in spiritual traditions – and can be a powerful prompt for storytelling. As part of your introductions, invite people to share a story about food and their faith, or about a certain food they love (or hate!) from a holiday or other ritual. Another idea is to invite people to bring an object that is sacred to them to tell a story about (see P10 in the Healing Supper Host Guidebook for another version of this exercise).

IN SETTING PROGRAMMING, DRAW ON THE GIFTS OF THE LEADERS AND TRADITIONS REPRESENTED AT THE TABLE.

Ask folks from different faiths to lead different parts of the supper, such as the opening ritual/prayer, toast, story prompts, or closing. Invite leaders from traditions who aren't usually heard in the dominant culture to go first. Encourage leaders to make the section their own by framing the questions, rituals, or toasts with stories from their tradition.

WHEN SHARING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OR STORIES FROM A TRADITION, DON'T UNIVERSALIZE.

If people lead prayers, practices or reflections from their faith, ask them to start with, "In my tradition, we do ..." or "In my tradition, we believe that ..." Being specific about naming where beliefs, practices, and stories come from can help guests feel more comfortable receiving the wisdom that each tradition has to offer without feeling like beliefs or practices are being forced on them.

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT PRAYER AND BLESSINGS.

Most faith traditions have rituals or prayers associated with food, before, during, or after a meal. These moments can be an opportunity for learning about and sharing spiritual practices across difference. However, it's important to make sure that people give consent before participating in or witnessing a prayer from another tradition or sharing prayer practices from their own. With your planning team, think about who will lead prayers and when (will there be multiple prayers? Or, will one tradition does an opening prayer, and another a closing prayer?). Will anyone need to pray at a certain point or in a separate space during the gathering time? Be in conversation with your co-hosts about how you will integrate prayer in a way that will feel good for everyone.

TELL US HOW IT WENT



Drawing from the experiences of supper hosts like you, we will be releasing a more in-depth guidebook for faith and spiritual communities. So be sure to share how your supper went by responding to our follow-up survey!

Are there particular rituals that you incorporated that helped make supper special that you'd like to share about? Are there creative ways you aligned your supper with a holiday or tradition in your community? Did you find out unique insights or challenges about hosting from your particular context, or across faith backgrounds?

Include these ideas in the survey or contact Margaret Ernst at margaret@faithmattersnetwork.org to share further, and we'll keep expanding our tools and collective knowledge.

Together, we can keep creating the conversations we need across the country in these times – diving ever deeper into the well of our spiritual practices and traditions as a resource to do so.

