

FEDstories

GROUP PROCESS

Careful leadership is critical for the fostering of a mutual learning community. We ask that the hosts take care to prepare well and provide the kind of leadership that encourages a warm experience of community, mutual trust and open sharing.

During the welcome, the host is asked to

1. **Outline the aims of FED Stories**
2. **Make the following points**

- In this gathering we are seeking to model being an effective mutual learning community.
- We invite you to hear one another's stories and questions with appreciation. While we encourage critical thinking, we ask that we might firstly engage with affirmation and positive feedback.
- No question is too basic – if you're thinking it, someone else probably is too.
- We ask you to allow one another the opportunity to participate – make space for others to speak.
- We each bring wisdom and experience to the group. We each bring questions worth asking and thoughts worth sharing. Let us seek to encourage participation from one another,

FED Stories Discussion

While we wish to encourage open conversation, some structure can help the group to interact with the stories. Here are some suggestions for facilitators.

- Don't let the speaker manage the question time unless you are confident that they can manage group process well.

- Invite people to interact briefly with a person sitting next to them: What grabbed you in the story? What did you appreciate about the story? What is a question that you'd like to ask the presenter?
- Invite people to ask questions of clarification of the presenter.
- Keep the initial focus on questions. If people launch into a commentary or critique, remind them that the focus is on asking questions.
- Invite people to begin with "what", "who", "when" and "how" type questions, then move into "why" questions about the underlying principles or foundations. Be prepared to introduce some "why" questions yourself to help the discussion go deeper.
- Consider using the whiteboard to identify questions or issues that people may wish to discuss over lunch.
- If some people are talking too much or too little, turn to a particular part of the group and say "Let's give people over here an opportunity to ask questions."
- If the presenter is too long-winded in replying, feel free to say "We want to fit in as many questions as we can, so we might need to keep the responses a bit briefer. There'll be opportunity to talk further over a meal."
- If questions aren't forthcoming, break people into groups of three and ask "What learnings can you take from this story back to your local setting?"
- If the questions slow down, consider asking people to make statements that begin with the words "I wonder..."

RESOURCES We encourage you to set up a resource table. Talk to your synod or presbytery education and mission staff about possible resources for display.

FEDstories

Formation. Education. Discipleship



"FED stories" is an initiative of the UCA Assembly to foster conversation about formation, education and discipleship across the Uniting Church. Based loosely on the well-known "TED Talks", FED Stories are intended to be regional gatherings where participants hear stories of congregational practices in relation to formation, education and discipleship.

Contact the FED unit for more information:
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Learning Together



How do faith communities foster lifelong growth in faith and discipleship? **FED Stories** is an opportunity for leaders to listen to and learn from one another in an environment of mutual encouragement and shared discovery.

The new Assembly Formation, Education and Discipleship unit invites congregations and presbyteries to host regional FED Stories events – half-day or evening gatherings where local stories are shared about activities, groups or processes that are bearing fruit in forming disciples of Jesus Christ.

We believe that as a church we can learn from each others' experiences and experiments, from long-held wisdom and from risk-taking adventure.

This brochure provides an outline for hosting a FED Stories event in your area.

Craig Mitchell
National Director
Formation, Education & Discipleship



Stories worth telling

AUDIENCE

A FED Stories gathering is aimed at ministers and key congregational leaders. The intent is that the gathering is collegial and also suitable for professional development for ministers.

HOSTING

Any congregation can offer to host a FED Stories event. The hope is that some congregations will see the hosting of such events a couple of times a year as part of their ongoing ministry. Presbyteries or other regional clusters may wish to encourage the hosting of these events.



The host congregation is asked to agree to the format provided. Templates to

assist promotion, including versions of the FED Stories logo, are available from the Assembly FED unit.

The host congregation is asked to

1. Provide a welcoming, hospitable environment with moveable seating, name tags/labels.
2. Provide data projection, audio, whiteboard.
3. Be well set up ahead of time.
4. Provide decent coffee and tea (preferably FairTrade, or at least Rainforest Alliance) and cool drink option and something to nibble at cuppa time.
5. Provide a space which is conducive to conversation where people can share a meal (usually BYO).

AIMS

1. To encourage shared learning about formation, education and discipleship: to model being a “learning community” through hospitality, open conversation and mutual enquiry
2. To encourage learning from intentional practice in the areas of formation education and discipleship: to foster intentionality in church leaders
3. To encourage theological and educational reflection on practice: to uncover foundations, principles, models, approaches

PLANNING

We suggest the following process:

1. Choose the date and venue 3 months in advance. A simple template flyer with the FED Stories logo is available.
2. Book speakers 3 months in advance.
3. Produce a flyer with the names of the speakers, where they are from, and a sentence about the focus of their story. A template for this is available. Distribute this 6–8 weeks ahead of the event. Ask people to RSVP 2 weeks before the event.
4. Consider setting up a Facebook page and/or use other social media and communication channels to promote the event.

FORMAT

The event can be run as a morning, afternoon or evening. It consists of story-telling, structured conversation and a simple meal. For example:

9.30 am

Welcome, introductions and prayer

9.45–10.15 am FED Story #1

Speaker (15 mins) followed by guided conversation (15 mins)

10.15–10.45 am FED Story #2

Speaker (15 mins) followed by guided conversation (15 mins)

10.45–11.15 am Cuppa

11.15–11.45 am FED Story #3

Speaker (15 mins) followed by guided conversation (15 mins)

11.45am–12.15 pm FED Input

Input to stimulate thinking about FED approaches. eg. recent thinking or research

Speaker (15 mins) followed by guided conversation (15 mins)

12.15 pm FED Resources

Participants are invited to mention resources, approaches, etc that

SPEAKERS – FED Stories

Speakers are invited by the host body. Assembly, synod and presbytery mission and education staff are able to suggest possible speakers. We encourage you to think about having one story from beyond the UCA, and where possible having some ‘first-hand’ input from those involved. The speaker is asked to

1. Tell a story from local practice in formation, education and discipleship – the “what” and “how”. This may be about a particular program, group or activity, or a broader description of a strategy or approach. The intention is not to describe all that a congregation does, but to go into some depth regarding a practice that is seen to be of interest to others (eg. mentoring, preparation for baptism & confirmation, spiritual disciplines, youth leadership development, all-age worship & learning.)
2. Provide some deeper reflection on why the particular approach was taken and/or how it developed – the “why”. This would include reference to any resources or references that underpin the approach.
3. Provide a transcript of 1 and 2 above, including references (print, WWW, etc)
4. Stick to the 15 minute time limit

SPEAKER – FED Input

A speaker is invited by the host body to provide some input about formation, education and discipleship. Assembly, synod and presbytery mission and education staff are able to suggest possible speakers.

The speaker is asked to

1. Focus the input on something that is seen to be relevant to the particular context.
2. Provide input that will be seen a fresh and worthwhile (NOT “same old, same old”...)
3. Provide summary notes/handouts for people to take away, including a list of further references.
4. Stick to the 15 minute time limit.