

# What Happens at a Care Committee Gathering?

1

**When it's time to begin**, the Facilitator may review our expected format:

- \* Opening Silence
- \* Focus Person to Speak
- \* Clarifying Questions.
- \* Speak from the Silence
- \* Wrap-up / Scheduling

After a time of centering silence, the Facilitator may offer a spoken prayer.

2

It takes courage to disclose something meaningful about yourself. Instead of speaking with the neutrality of a journalist, the Focus Person is invited to reflect on how recent events have shaped the spiritual landscape of his or her life. What is bringing comfort or new energy? What is causing pain or discouragement? Where is God especially present (or absent)? Speaking with vulnerability allows the Care Committee to do its deepest work.

As the Focus Person is speaking, members of the Care Committee are encouraged to pay attention to *what's behind the words*. When do emotions come to the surface? What words are repeated most often? When is the Focus Person most animated?

3

When the focus person has finished speaking, members of the Care Committee are invited to ask clarifying questions. At this point, the Committee is asked to suspend judgment. Ask questions because you don't know the answer. Avoid *leading questions*, which are meant to nudge the Focus Person toward a conclusion.

Be mindful of your assumptions. For example, instead of asking, "How did you handle your embarrassment?" you may realize that the Focus Person never said he was embarrassed; You've made an assumption based on how you would feel. Realizing this, you might ask, "How did you feel in that situation?" The answer might surprise you.

The goal is to deepen your understanding, so you may be fully present.

4

In the silence, members of the Care Committee can begin to reflect on their impressions. What have you noticed? What conclusions are you starting to draw? Hold loosely to your opinions, and see what deeper questions they may inspire. For example, you may have concluded, "Her boss is a tyrant." This sort of conclusion is less valuable than asking the Focus Person: "What would help you stay centered when working with your boss?" A question invites the Focus Person to participate in the process of discernment. Use the silence to move beyond your first impressions.

To preserve a sense of worshipful listening, it is very helpful to *leave a period of silence* between each speaker.

In the silence, you may be led to describe an image, make an observation or speak a single word. Trust in your discernment.

In the silence, listen for how God is speaking through other members of the Care Committee. How does someone else's question or insight shape what you are led to say?

Sometimes, the tone of the gathering shifts from worshipful listening to a more casual dialogue. The Facilitator may discern whether to invite Friends back into silence.

5

The Focus Person may be asked, "What image or insight would you like to take from this gathering?" Even if it is only a word or two, naming can help us remember.

Before everyone leaves, schedule the next Care Committee. The Facilitator might begin with the observation, "This is the 4th Tuesday; next month that would be..." as the first option in getting another meeting on the schedule.