**Conversation Guide for “Travel Like Dave”**

In addition to homestays, worship, and table fellowship, a key component of this guest/host experience is to engage one another in a learning conversation about your respective congregations and contexts. The following is a suggested structure to assist your reflection time of about 1.5 hours. Adapt this guide to your context and weekend schedule as needed.

**WHEN:** Possible conversation timeframes include (1) after Sunday’s noon fellowship meal, (2) in an extended Sunday School hour as a large group, or even (3) as part of the initial Saturday evening meal (*if* having a large group supper rather than splitting up in various homes).

**WHO:** The official hosting group should identify a facilitator for this conversation time.

If the host congregation gathering for this session is much larger than the guest delegation, the hosts may need to assign a handful of “official” spokespersons from their group to respond as a panel to the questions *or* divide visitor pairs among smaller table groupings and use the questions below at table groups (with summary sharing to the large group).

**WHAT:** The basic content of your time together could be structured with the following elements, each of which are laid out in greater detail in the following pages.

1. **Welcome**
2. **Guiding Scripture**
3. **Introductions**
4. **Reflection Questions**
5. **Mutual Prayers**
6. **Gift/Symbol Exchange**
7. **Sending Blessing**
8. **(Follow-up Testimony)**
9. **Welcome** (*3-5 minutes*)
10. The host congregation’s facilitator or other designated leader welcomes the guests.
11. The leader gives an overview of the purpose and basic structure of this gathered time. As an explanation of purpose, for example, the CPMC Covenant and Spiritual Practice #4 could be read along with commentary like that which follows:

**Our Covenant [as CPMC congregations] -** “In response to God’s unqualified love for us, we covenant to common practices through which we submit ourselves completely to the purposes of God who longs to transform us into the likeness of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

**Spiritual Practice #4 -** “We will accept and offer hospitality, believing it creates the context for God’s kingdom to appear in our midst, particularly as we minister to the poor, the hungry, the prisoner and the stranger.”

*While we may not be particularly “poor, hungry or imprisoned,” our two churches are certainly something of strangers to one another! So on this weekend of accepting and offering hospitality, we have time for learning about each other’s congregations and neighborhoods. As our covenant claims, we believe that our time together creates a space for Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven to appear among us. May that be so today!*

1. The leader offers a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s presence, asking the Holy Spirit to open ears and eyes that the voice and face of Jesus be revealed in your midst.
2. Depending on the musical habits of your groups, a song of gathering, worship or prayer might be sung together at this time (e.g. green *Sing the Journey* #4 “You’ve Got a Place”)
3. **Guiding Scripture** (*5 minutes*)

To place this time of giving and receiving hospitality in the larger context of the stories of God’s people, read **one** of the following scripture narratives. Ask the group to listen for the ways God’s presence, good news, or other blessing shows up in the characters’ interactions:

* **1 Kings 17:5-24** *Elijah receives hospitality from the Syrian widow*
* *or* **Genesis 18:1-16** *Abraham and Sarah give hospitality to God/God’s messengers*

After the reading, the leader could ask for 3 or 4 observations or wonderings about the passage.

1. **Introductions** (*20-25 minutes, depending on group size*)
   1. To get to know the ***individuals*** present, go around and make personal introductions sharing your names and, if group size allows, a piece of helpful or fun introductory personal information. (*If* the host congregation has more than a few dozen present, the visitors may be the only ones able to share their names, and perhaps a few key hosts.)
   2. To get to know the ***congregations***, someone from each group gives a few minutes of introduction of your church. (Further clarifying questions can be asked later; see #4 below.) Some relevant introductory information could include:

* number and kinds of people typically present,
* the congregation’s “personality” and spirituality streams,
* a few key events, trends or other history of the congregation,
* something unique or distinguishing about the congregation,
* some characteristics of your wider community/town/neighborhood,
* a special ministry or mission focus or passion

1. **Reflection Questions** (*30-40 minutes*)

Following introductions, the facilitator poses the following questions to both groups so as to learn more about each other’s congregations. The host church, if large, may wish to designate a panel of respondents. (Alternately, break into smaller table groups, ensuring that at least 1-2 visitors are in each. If this is done, end by sharing table summaries with the large group.)

1. **How do you spend your time together as a congregation?**

**What are the most life-giving parts of that life together and why?**

1. **Which ministries do you feel are most vital to your church’s wellbeing? How so?**
2. **What opportunities across the street or around the world excite your mission?**

**How *have* you responded? How do you *dream of* responding?**

1. **What other questions do you have for members of the other church?**

End with one-minute responses to three overview questions (perhaps posed to the pastors):

1. **What is going well for your congregation (what gives you joy)?**
2. **What challenges are you facing?**
3. **How can we support and pray for your church?**
4. **Mutual Prayers** (*10 minutes*)

Gather in a circle as group size allows, having the congregational groups pray for one another, including the things shared in the last reflection question (G.). Close with the Lord’s prayer.

[\*\**If this reflection session happens* before *your day together is complete, the following final steps of Gift Giving and Sending Blessing should wait until the conclusion of your time.*]

1. **Gift/Symbol Exchange** (*5 minutes*)

The visiting congregation is encouraged to bring a simple and inexpensive gift or symbol to leave with the hosting congregation. As a way of departing in blessing, now is the time for the guests to share the gift with their hosts, expressing why they chose that particular item.

This is also an appropriate time for the visitors to offer words of thanksgiving to the hosts. It is also fruitful to name an affirmation of something of God you’ve seen in the host church. (If this is not done now, include such affirmation later in the follow-up testimony letter.)

1. **Sending Blessing** (*5 minutes*)

Bid farewell and depart with Christ’s peace. This may involve a sending song, a spoken benediction, and “passing the peace” (i.e. “*The peace of Christ be with you*”… “*And also with you,*” or in some traditions, “holy hugs” or handshakes in lieu of the brotherly kiss!)

1. **(Follow-up Testimony)**

Upon returning home, the visiting group will share a testimony of their experience with their own congregation. They should also send a written copy of this testimony to the host church, along with a thank you for the hospitality received.

Please consider also sharing your testimony with the Outreach and Service Committee or conference staff. We would love to hear it at Annual Meeting!