

What are focus groups?

Focus groups provide opportunities for small groups of individuals to engage in a facilitated discussion of a topic. For instance, in the proposed model, our focus groups will:

- 1-Be intergenerational;*
- 2-Consist of a few groups from each convocation or a couple of convocations meeting together;*
- 3-Focus on theological reflection and offer opportunities for others to listen to the focus group discussions.*

What are the benefits of having focus group discussions?

As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are designed to gather “deep dive” information regarding areas of interest. As such, small group participants are a representative sample of the communities in which the findings will be used. The findings can be a catalyst for ongoing discernment on a variety of issues, including meaning-making, visioning, decision-making, goal setting, and allocation of resources.

What is theological reflection?[1]

Theological Reflection is a process of exploration in which we consider the ways of God with God’s creation. We engage this process by reflecting on our individual and communal experiences in the acknowledged presence of God. As a relational endeavor with God, theological reflection is best done in the context of prayer, asking questions that bring different theological lenses to bear on our experiences. As an inductive process, theological reflection begins with experience and seeks light from God, Christian wisdom, and human wisdom. It discerns how God acts within humanity, including the particulars of our cultural, social, economic, political, religious, and other contexts.

What is the goal of theological reflection?

The goal is to hear God with a listening heart, engage God’s ongoing self-revelation, and come to a deeper understanding of who God is in relation to humanity and the world around us. We then can discern how best to respond faithfully in ministry.

What are some examples of theological reflection questions?

- How are you sensing God’s presence and/or absence during this time of challenge?
- What have you learned about yourself in relationship to God and your spiritual life?
- How is the Way of Love being revealed in your faith community?
- What learnings have you gained about your own spiritual life?
- Where do you see the Spirit at work in the life of the Church?
- What do you see dying?
- What do you see being born?

[1] Adopted and adapted from Colloquy Guidelines, Virginia Theological Seminary, 2018. Special thanks to the Rev. Jacques Hadler and the Rev. Dr. Allison St. Louis.